ACROSS / A14

P220,000 per street lamp in Cebu's Asean summit actually costs only P12,000

WORLD / A20

US VP Cheney's ex-chief of staff found guilty of perjury, obstruction of justice

WORLD / A20

Indon jet bursts into flames on landing; 23 killed, 117 survived

BUSINESS / B1

Gov't starts streamlining bureaucracy: 12 agencies to lay off 2,065 workers

website: www.inquirer.net

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, March 8, 2007 ★★ 5 sections P18 Vol. 22 / No. 90

Solon in total denial despite CGFNS rebuff

ANG KUKULIT NINYO!!!

By Christian V. Esguerra

"IT'S NOT OVER TILL IT'S over," says Rep. Monico Puentevella.

Despite a final denial of the Philippine mission's appeal, Puentevella is not

SOLON/ A6

GMA orders test retake, to pay taker's P900 fee

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

FINALLY, A RETAKE.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has given the go-signal for the partial and voluntary retake of the leak-affected portions of the June 2006 nursing licensure examination for those planning to work as nurses in the United States.

And the government will pay the P900 fee for

GMA ORDERS/ A6

Rare Palawan dolphins now down to 47–WWF

By Gregg Yan
Contributor

BOUND BY LAND ON TWO SIDES AND protected by Mt. Capaoas, Malampaya Sound in northern Palawan is the last haven of the rare Irrawaddy Dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) in the Philippines.

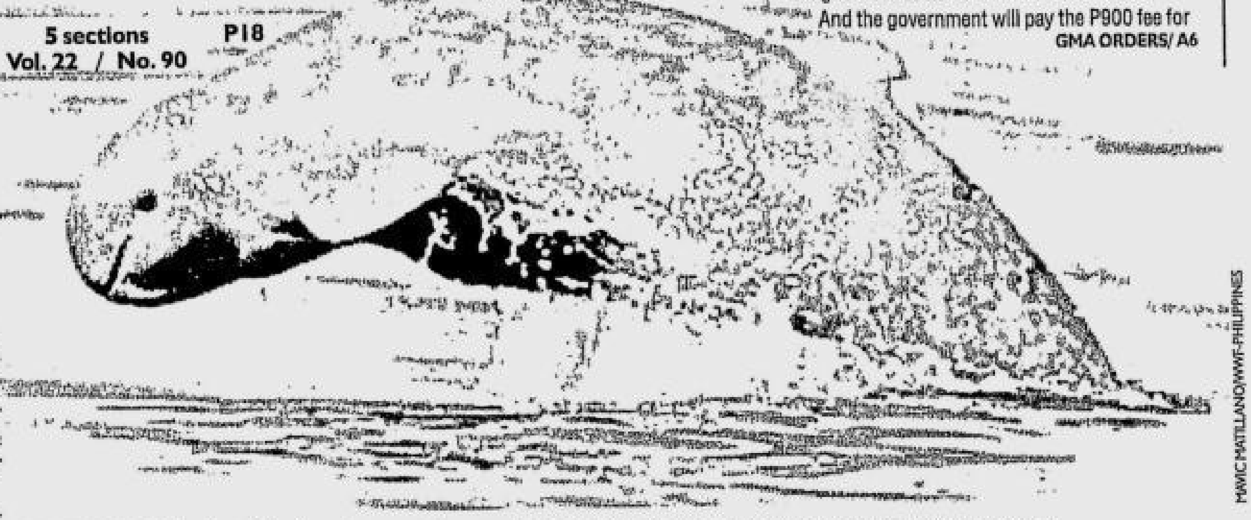
As another dawn breaks, a few of the dolphins can be seen cavorting among themselves.

The Irrawaddy is a light-gray to white marine mammal with a small, triangular dorsal fin.

While Bottlenose Dolphins rule over the outer Sound, the smaller and more delicate Irrawaddies inhabit its inner portions.

Named after Burma's Irrawaddy Riv-

RARE/ A6


MAVIC MATILLANO/WWF-PHILIPPINES

LAST HAVEN for the critically endangered Irrawaddy Dolphin is the Malampaya Sound in Northern Palawan.

Kiko No. 1, tops Loren

Palace: Change of uniforms but no pullout of Metro troops

By Michael Lim Ubac and Christine O. Avendaño

THE SOLDIERS DEPLOYED TO 26 BARANGAYS in Metro Manila since December will not be recalled but have been ordered to "dress down," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday.

Ermita admitted at his weekly press briefing that the presence of soldiers in full battle gear among residents of depressed areas in the metropolis was "shocking."

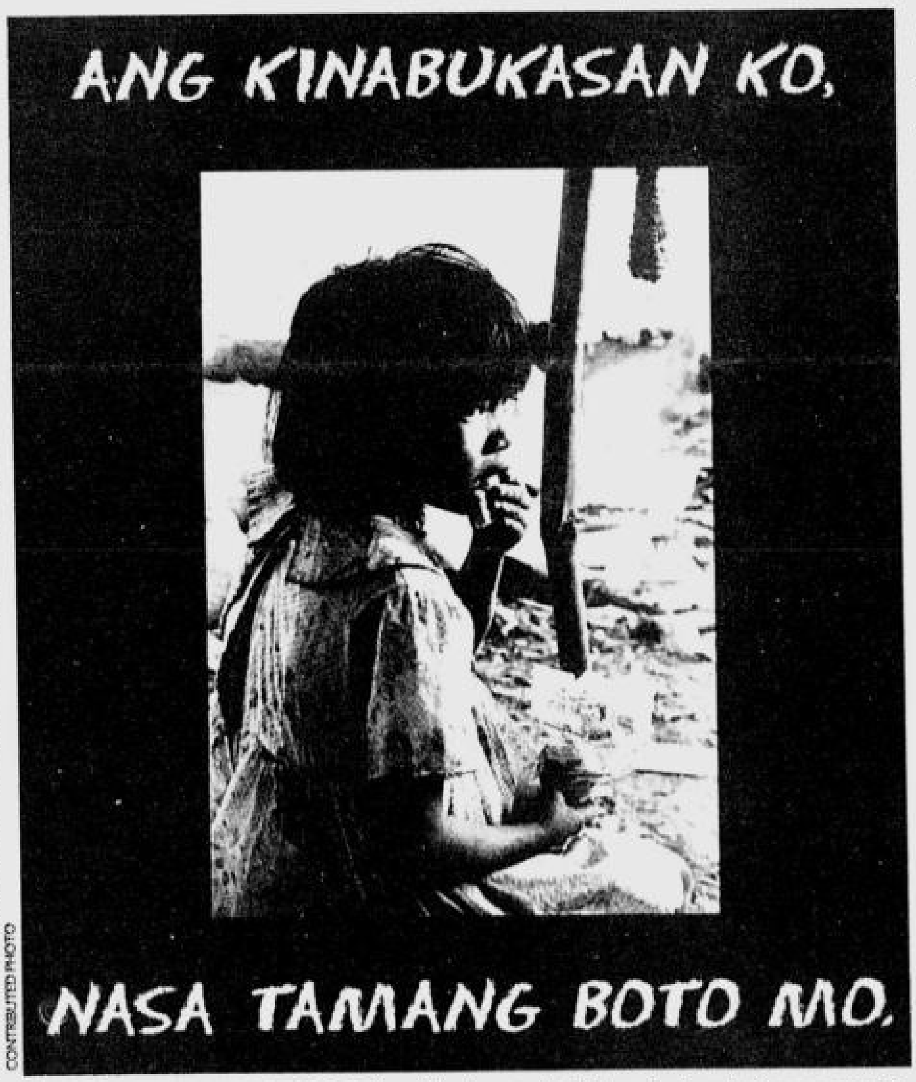
He said that during election periods, soldiers should only maintain peace and order, ensure that the people were freely exercising their right of suffrage, and "such other duties as may be mandated under a [Commission on Elections] resolution."

Ermita was responding to the complaint of party-list groups that soldiers had been openly campaigning against leftist organizations that would take part in the parallel party-list elections in May.

"If that has happened, we will remind [the soldiers] not to do it again because it smacks of getting involved unnecessarily in elections," he said.

Ermita said that after seeing front-page pictures in several dailies showing soldiers moving around with long arms, he called up Camp

NO RECALL/ A15



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

THE PICTURE IS THE MESSAGE. Doing their share to hold clean elections in May, a group of photojournalists is circulating this poster on the Internet showing a street child whose future is in dire need of thinking, dynamic and hardworking leaders with good, clean hearts and hands.

Opposition leads 9-3 in latest SWS survey

By Kate Pedroso
Inquirer Research

NINE INDEPENDENT and opposition candidates led by Sen. Francis Pangilinan topped a survey on senatorial preferences last month by the Social Weather Stations with administration aspirants snagging only three slots in the magic 12 circle, the SWS said yesterday.

The SWS First Quarter 2007 Survey showed that over one in two registered voters (56 percent) chose Pangilinan, an independent reelectionist. Former Sen. Loren Legarda (54 percent) placed second and Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. (52 percent) copped the third spot, according to the SWS release.

Legarda had previously topped the third and fourth quarter rounds of the SWS surveys last year.

In a press statement, an elated Pangilinan said, "When we decided to run as an independent candidate, we placed the future of our political life in the hands of the Filipino people, and trusted and prayed that our people will support candidates who may be saddled by a lack of formidable and moneyed machinery, but are

KIKO TOPS/ A7

ELECTION '07

SWS Feb 2007 Survey

RANK	SENATORIAL BETS	%
1	Pangilinan, Francis N.	56
2	Legarda, Loren B.	54
3	Villar, Manuel Jr. B.	52
4-5	Cayetano, Alan Peter S.	43
4-5	Lacson, Panfilo M.	43
6-7	Escudero, Francis Joseph G.	37
6-7	Recto, Ralph G.	37
8	Sotto, Vicente III C.	31
9-10	Osmeña, John Henry R.	30
9-10	Aquino, Benigno Simeon III C.	30
11	Honasan, Gregorio B.	29
12	Arroyo, Joker P.	28
13	Angara, Edgardo J.	27
14	Pimentel, Aquilino L.	26
15	Defensor, Michael T.	21
16	Roco, Sonia M.	19
17	Zubiri, Juan Miguel F.	18
18-19	Gomez, Richard I.	15
18-19	Montano, Cesar	15
20	Magsaysay, Vicente P.	14
21	Coseteng, Anna Dominique M.	13
22-24	Pichay, Prospero Jr., A.	12
22-24	Trillanes, Antonio IV, F.	12
22-24	Oreta, Teresa Tao A.	12
25	Singson, Luis C.	7
26	Cayetano, Joselito P.	6
27	Atienza, Arturo A.	5
28	Chavez, Melchor G.	4
29	Bautista, Martin D.	3
30-33	Cabrera, Rafael M.	2
30-33	Kiram, Jamalul D.	2
30-33	Villanueva, Vicente Y.	2
	None\Refused\Don't Know	14

SOURCE: SOCIAL WEATHER STATIONS
INQGRAPHIC: LOUIE BACANI

Ombudsman also sitting on 6 graft cases vs NPO chief

By Jerry E. Esplanada and Juliet Labog-Javellana

LIKE MALACAÑANG, THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman seems to be in no hurry to act on at least six graft cases filed by a group of state-accredited printers against the director of the National Printing Office (NPO).

In the Ombudsman cases filed eight months ago, the printers called for the criminal prosecution of Felipe Evardone, whom they accused of multiple violations of Republic Acts 3019 and 9184, or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and Govern-

OMBUDSMAN/ A15

RP tops int'l poll of senior women execs

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

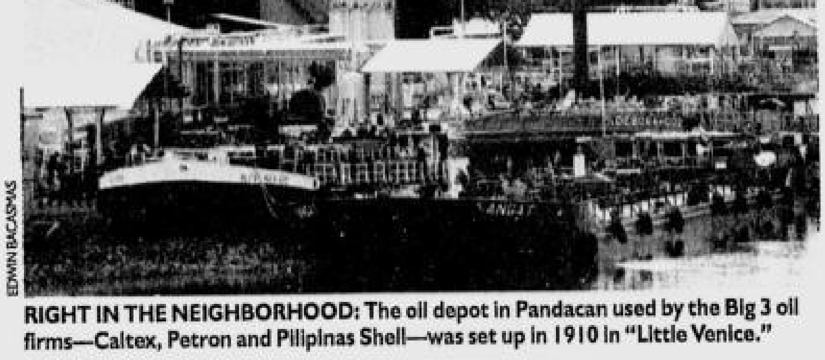
THE SM GROUP'S TERESITA SY-Coson, Magsaysay Shipping chief executive Doris Magsaysay-Ho, Isla Lipana partner Tammy Lipana, Figaro Coffee Corp. chief executive Pacita U. Juan, Summit Publishing group head Lisa Gokongwei-Cheng and National Bookstore founder Socorro Ramos.

They are just some of the female senior managers and owners of companies who helped to make the Philippines come out in an international survey as having the highest proportion of businesses where women hold senior management positions.

According to the Grant Thornton International Business Report, released to mark International Women's Day today, 97 percent of businesses in the Philippines have women in senior management positions, the highest among the 32

RP TOPS/ A6

SC orders oil firms to leave Pandacan


EDWIN BACASMAS

RIGHT IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: The oil depot in Pandacan used by the Big 3 oil firms—Caltex, Petron and Pilipinas Shell—was set up in 1910 in "Little Venice."

By Leila B. Salaverria and Allison W. Lopez

THE SUPREME COURT YESTERDAY ORDERED THE closure of the Pandacan oil depot in Manila that three big oil companies are using because it could be a terrorist target.

The oil firms are Caltex Philippines Inc. (now Chevron), Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp.

Sitting on the southern bank of the Pasig River near Malacañang Palace, the sprawling depot supplies about half of Luzon's fuel needs and about 82 percent of Metro Manila's gasoline and diesel requirements.

The Supreme Court directed Mayor Lito Atienza to "immediately enforce" a local ordinance meant to prevent an attack on the facility and to protect the public.

Atienza said he had no plans of filing a motion for recon-

SC ORDERS/ A15

Joma, Satur ordered arrested for murders

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—A REGIONAL Trial Court judge in Hilongos, Leyte, has issued arrest warrants against communist leaders Jose Maria Sison and Luis Jalandoni and Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo for multiple murder in connection with the mass grave discovered in Inopacan town in August last year.

The arrest warrants against Sison, the founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines, Jalandoni, spokesperson of the National Democratic Front, and Ocampo, an erstwhile top leader of the NDF, were among 53 other such arrest orders issued on Monday by Judge Ephrem Abando, presiding judge of RTC Branch 18.

Abando told the INQUIRER in a long distance interview yesterday that he issued the warrants of arrest based on the resolution filed with his court by lawyer Roulo Vivero, Leyte's assistant provin-

JOMA/ A7

EZ2 ⑩ ㉗ | **FOUR DIGIT** ⑨ ⑨ ③ ⑥

Mid-Day SUERTRES Evening
⑤ ③ ⑨ | ⑧ ⓪ ④
(All in exact order)

MEGALOTTO 6/45
④ ㉔ ㉕ ㉖ ㊳ ㊹
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Second FrontPage

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered light rains. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	**Roxas**	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	**Cebu**	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	**Tacloban**	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	**Cagayan de Oro**	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	**Davao**	Partly Cloudy

COMPILED BY: LAW DE GUZMAN, INQUIRER RESEARCH/03/07/07 SOURCE: PAGASA

Killings create climate of impunity – US report

By Cynthia D. Balana and Michael Lim Ubac

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS and the murder of journalists by various groups went unsolved and unpunished last year, contributing to the climate of impunity in the Philippines, the US State Department said in its annual global human rights report.

The US Country Report on Human Rights Practices, covering 82 countries, is prepared by the US State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor and submitted every year to the US Congress. It was released yesterday by the US Embassy in Manila.

The report on the Philippines said that in 2006 there were "a number of arbitrary, unlawful and extrajudicial killings apparently by elements of the security services and of political killings, including killings of journalists, by a variety of actors."

It said many of these killings went unsolved despite intensified government efforts during the year to investigate and prosecute these cases. It said that investigation of cases from 2004 and 2005, including the killing of judges, were still ongoing.

Delayed trials

"Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces; however, some elements of these security forces committed human rights abuses," it said.

It said that arbitrary or warrantless arrests and detentions "were common."

"Trials were delayed and procedures were prolonged. Prisoners awaiting trial and those already convicted were often held under primitive conditions. Corruption was a problem in all the institutions making up the criminal justice system, including police, prosecutorial and judicial organs," it said.

The report also said the New People's Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, killed local government officials, left-wing activists and civilians, including through the use of land mines.

It said both the NPA and other terrorist groups used underage soldiers in combat roles, including bombing attacks.

The report also said vigilante groups conducted summary killings of suspected criminals in two major cities and local officials appeared to condone and even encourage them.

During a brief "state of emergency" in February 2006, the report noted some attempts to curtail the freedom of the press and the right of assembly.

Downplayed by Palace

Malacañang yesterday tried to downplay the US State Department report, with Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita saying it was just a "reminder" from a longtime ally.

"They only want to remind us" so that the issue will not be a thorn in the two countries' relations, he said.

He pointed out that the country enjoyed a "long and fruitful" relationship with the United States, so Washington officials "don't want to castigate" the Philippine government.

Ermita said President Macapagal-Arroyo could not be faulted that she was not doing enough to stem the killings as she has created Task Force Usig, the Melo Commission and even invited United Nations Special Rapporteur Philip Alston.

Ermita, who had lunch with US Ambassador Kristie Kenney last week, said Kenney appeared "satisfied with the steps being taken by the President" to resolve the killings.

Gov't probing 94 killings

DEFENSE AND MILITARY LEADERS ARE now looking into 94 cases of alleged extrajudicial killing that may have involved the police, the military and civilian volunteers.

Defense spokesperson Ernesto Carolina said yesterday the 94 cases "where security forces are probably involved" are now being investigated by the newly created Armed Forces human rights office.

The 94 were among the 240 and 113 cases that the Melo Commission and police-created Task Force Usig, respectively, recommended for investigation.

"We can say that the 94 cases have probable cause for investigation," Carolina said.

This was because the cases had indicated names, incidents and circumstances pointing to the probable involvement of security forces, he said.

He said the military and defense establishments were told by President Macapagal-Arroyo to "go deeper" into the alleged extrajudicial killings.

"It's important for us not just to debate on this but let's see each case," Carolina said. *Christine O. Avendaño*

Troops pull out of 3 embattled Cotabato villages

MIDSAYAP, NORTH COTABATO—SOLDIERS who figured in a clash with Moro rebels in three remote villages here have been pulled out.

"This is to avoid similar clashes in the future," said Lt. Col. Julieto Ando, 6th Infantry Division spokesperson.

"Clearly, this is to avoid a repeat of Monday night's firefight that left 17 rebels and a soldier dead," Ando told the INQUIRER.

Brig. Gen. Edgardo Gurrea, government ceasefire panel chair, and his counterpart in the MILF, Von Al Haq, agreed on Tuesday afternoon that MILF forces and soldiers return to their original position prior to January's fighting.

"Everything is geared toward restoration of normalcy in these productive villages," Gurrea said.

On Friday, the Malaysian-led international monitoring team will establish a joint monitoring and assistance team in the villages of Lumupog and Kadigasan, site of Monday's firefight.

The two villages and another, Sambolawan, used to be occupied by MILF forces. During the clashes in Barangay Rangaban in January, the MILF withdrew across Rio Grande de Mindanao as agreed by ceasefire committees. But the military established two detachments there, according to MILF spokesperson Eid Kabalu.

Truce violation

Kabalu said they did not object to the Army's positioning in Lumupog and Kadigasan because they served as security of 40 US servicemen who conducted medical and dental mission in Datu Piang, Maguindanao.

Datu Piang and the villages of Lumupog and Kadigasan are separated by a river.

Kabalu said a week after the medical and dental services was over, the military appeared to be going permanent in the two villages, a clear violation of the local truce.

"That triggered the clashes Monday," Kabalu said. *Edwin O. Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 1005 Series 2006.

Newsbreak's online editor arrested

By Santiago R. Alcantara

THE ONLINE EDITOR OF NEWSbreak magazine was arrested yesterday by two Pasig City policemen in connection with a libel case filed against her and four of her colleagues by Ilocos Sur Gov. and administration Team Unity senatorial candidate Luis "Chavit" Singson.

Gemma Bagayaua, 34, who wrote the alleged libelous article about Singson titled "Beyond Vigan" on June 6, 2005, was arrested at Newsbreak's office at Unit 502 Gabriel III Condominium Unit, Amethyst Drive in Pasig City.

Arresting officer PO1 Marcial Sibal said that Bagayaua would have to stay for one night inside a cell in Pasig City after she failed to post bail.

Sibal and PO1 Tirso Atuan, who were in civilian clothes, arrested Bagayaua at around 3 p.m.

The warrant of arrest was issued by Vigan Regional Trial Court Branch 21 under Judge Dominador Arquelada.

Bagayaua's co-accused include Newsbreak editorial staff Marites Vitug, Mean Hontiveros, Lala Remando and Aries Rufo. Glenda Gloria is the magazine's managing editor but was not included in the suit.

Pasig City Police Chief Francisco Uyami said that Bagayaua did not resist arrest.

The article "Beyond Vigan" told of how Singson "expanded his sphere of influence" under the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

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WELCOME

KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES TO THE ASIA-PACIFIC CONVENTION

KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINE LUZON DISTRICT HOSTS 32nd ASIA-PACIFIC CONVENTION IN MANILA

The Philippine Luzon District of Kiwanis International hosts the 32nd Asia-Pacific convention at the famous Hyatt Hotel and Casino in Malate, Manila on March 8-10, 2007 with the theme, "ASPAC makes the Difference". District Governor Anthony Macaraig leads the host district in welcoming delegates and guests from the region to the beautiful City of Manila. The convention preparations are in-place for a fun-filled and memorable stay in the Philippines.

The Chairman of the Organizing Committee, Past Governor Wilfredo L.Valencia, expects the Kiwanis International President Nelson Tucker to lead the delegation from various countries in the Asia Pacific region which includes districts from Japan, Australia, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand-South Pacific, Philippine Luzon, Philippine South, Taiwan, and the Kiwanis Nations/Areas of Bangladesh, Guam, Hong Kong, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka.

This convention provides opportunity for Kiwanians to share success stories on services rendered to children around the world. Service is never culture-bound nor it is limited by territories. It also encourages fellowship amongst nations with a common adherence to rendering altruistic service to mankind.

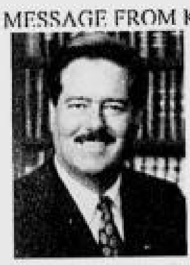
MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY
PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO

Warmest greetings to all the officers and member clubs of Kiwanis International as you hold your 32nd Asia-Pacific (ASPAC) Convention in Manila on March 8-10, 2007.

Your theme, "ASPAC Makes the Difference", with reference to its service to the children of the world, reflects the unwavering commitment of your organization of volunteers dedicated to change the world and to make it a better place to live.

The government is glad to have you as a partner in moving the country forward and in showcasing our country to our Asia-Pacific neighbors. Together, we will extend genuine service to the children of the world in general and of the Philippines in particular to achieve a stronger citizenry for the future.
More power and Mabuhay!

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO



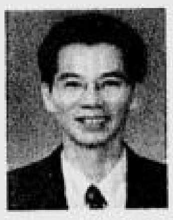
MESSAGE FROM KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL
PRESIDENT NELSON TUCKER

Fellow Kiwanians, Welcome to Manila and the annual Kiwanis Asia-Pacific convention. I look forward to meeting each of you and sharing the fellowship of Kiwanis.
A few weeks ago, Kiwanis International marked its 92nd anniversary. Few other volunteer organizations can boast of so many years and so many achievements. But I am most encouraged – yes, even excited! – by the fact that as an organization, Kiwanis is totally oriented towards the future. Only by looking forward, only by shaping our own future rather than by waiting for the future to shape us, can we move this organization forward.

This is the purpose of everything we do, to move Kiwanis forward. If you take nothing else away from this convention, I hope it will be this spirit of moving forward, of creating the Kiwanis we need to serve the world tomorrow.

We're the luckiest people in the world, because we have the ability and the desire to share our lives with others. We are members of a great service club with a long history and an unlimited future. I am honored to serve as your International President and proud to share the title "Kiwanian" with each of you.

NELSON TUCKER
Kiwanis International President



MESSAGE FROM ASPAC CHAIRMAN

I would like to thank you for your support and participation in the 2007 ASPAC convention in Manila, Philippines. The convention would not have been such a success without you.

Being a Kiwanian for 20 some years. I have been blessed to be able to work with Kiwanis leaders at all levels from all over Asia-Pacific. Thank you for giving me the opportunity t serve you and the support and friendship that I have shared with all of you.
Kiwanis is striving to evolve from a good organization to a great global organization. As we march into the one million member goal of Kiwanis for year 2015, let's all remember that this is OUR organization, and that each of you constitutes the most important part of Kiwanis. Kiwanis Asia-Pacific would not have been without you.

Thank you for being a Kiwanian. Let's all take pride in our endeavors, believe in ourselves and build from our strengths. Together, we will make a difference and build a greater team of volunteers that are dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time.

Wish you all the best and happiness in your family, business, and Kiwanis services.

Tien-Lai "David" Lin
Chairman, Kiwanis Asia-Pacific

MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN, ASPAC ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

My warmest greetings and felicitations to all Delegates of the 32nd Asia-Pacific Convention of Kiwanis International on 08-10 March 2007.

The event's theme- ASPAC Makes the Difference"- clearly speaks of the undiminished commitment of the Kiwanis volunteers in this region to Kiwanis International objects, vision, and mission. It reiterates our fervent goal of moving the organization to a higher level of rendering service to changing the world, one child and one community at a time.
May all delegates enjoy the event and their stay in Manila, Philippines. Always remember the immense responsibility to serve as we return to our own community in serving the children of the world.
MABUHAY!!!

PDG WILFREDO L. "BOY" VALENCIA
Chairman, 2007 ASPAC Organizing Committee

32nd ANNUAL CONVENTION 2007
Official Program

Thursday, 8th March 2007

TIME	EVENT (All events are Open to Registered Kiwanians and Registered Guests; unless otherwise stated)	VENUE (Attire)
7:00am-12:00pm	Golf Tournament (All Kiwanians & Guests on own account)	Hotel lobby, G/F CanGolf, Canlubang, Laguna
7:am-5:00pm	Registration (All Kiwanians & Guests) **"Best Service Project"** Reports to be submitted by Kiwanis Nations and Districts at Convention Secretariat.	Cloak Room, 3/F
8:00am-9:00am	**Courtesy Call to the Mayor of Manila City (By Invitation)**	Manila City Hall (Business Suit)
9:00am-3:15pm	**ASPAC Executive Board Meeting (By Invitation)**	Le Salon, 3/F (Business Casual)
3:15pm-4:30pm	**Governor's Meeting with International President Nelson Tucker**	Meeting Room 1, 3/F (Business Casual)
3:30pm-5:00pm	**Kiwanis 8-Nations Conference** For Kiwanis Leaders & Members from Bangladesh, Guam, Hongkong, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Singapore & Sri Lanka	Le Salon, 3/F (Business Casual)
7:00pm-9:00pm	ASPAC Board Dinner (By Invitation)	Le Salon, 3/F (Evening Casual)

Friday, 9th March 2007

7:00am-5:00pm	Registration (All Kiwanians and Guests)	Cloak Room, 3/F
7:00am-8:00am	Exhibits to be put up by Districts at Ballroom Foyer	Ballroom Foyer, 6/F
8:00am-10:00am	**General Business Session I**	Le Salon, 3/F (Business Suit or Smart Business Wear)
10:15am-11:30am	**Forum: Mission Possible – 1 Million Members by 2015** Moderated by: International President Nelson Tucker and International Trustee Hwang Chia Sing	Le Salon, 3/F (Business Suit or Smart Business Wear)
2:00pm-5:00pm	**Grand Opening Ceremony** 1. Entrance to the Main Hall (15 minutes) 2. Entrance of National Flags 3. National Anthems 4. Recognition of Kiwanians and Guests 5. Welcome Address by Convention Organizing Committee Chairman Wilfredo L. Valencia (3 mins.) 6. Welcome Address by the Governor of the Host District of Philippine Luzon, Anthony Macaraig (3 mins.) 7. Address by ASPAC Chairman Tien-Lai "David" Lin. 8. Address by International President Nelson Tucker 9. Message by Hon. Mayor Jose L. Atienza, Jr., City of Manila 10. Keynote Message by the Secretary, Department of Tourism, Philippines, Hon. Joseph H. Durano 11. Cultural/Choral Performance (45 minutes) 12. Presentation of Gifts	Grand Ballroom, 6/F (Business Suit or Smart Business Wear)
7:00pm-10:00pm	**Welcome Dinner**	Grand Ballroom, 6/F (Evening Casual)

Saturday, 10th March 2007

8:00am-7:00pm	Exhibits by Districts and Exhibitors	Ballroom Foyer, 6/F
9:00am-10:30am	**General Business Session II**	Le Salon, 3/F (Business Casual)
11:00am-12:pm	**Forum: Service Leadership Programs for Asia-Pacific** Moderated by: International President-Elect Dave Curry and International Trustee Michelle Wu	Le Salon, 3/F (Business Casual)
12:00pm-1:30pm	**Lunch**	Ballroom, 6/F
2:00pm-3:00pm	**General Business Session III**	
3:30pm-5:00pm	**Joint Meeting: ASPAC Executive Board 2006-07 & 2007-08**	Fireplace, 5/F
7:00pm-10:00pm	**Closing Ceremonies and Farewell Dinner** 1. Report on Election Results by ASPAC Chairman Tien-Lai "David" Lin. 2. Presentation by Districts and Nations (10 mins.) 3. Message – Hon. Ignacio "Toting" Bunye, Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman 4. Closing remarks by Convention Organizing Committee Chairman Wilfredo L. Valencia 5. Handing Over of Convention Flag to 2008 ASPAC Convention Organizing Chairman Teguh Budiono 6. Awards for Best Service Project and Best District Exhibit. 7. Fellowship	Grand Ballroom, 6/F (Smart Casual)

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- To provide, through Kiwanis clubs, a practical means to form enduring friendships, to render altruistic service, and to build better communities.
- To cooperate in creating and maintaining that sound public opinion and high idealism which make possible the increase of righteousness, justice, patriotism, and goodwill.

Hunger strikers have mixed feelings over reinstatement

FARMER-BENEFICIARIES ON HUNGER STRIKE have mixed feelings about Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman's move to finally install them at their land inside a sugarcane plantation in Negros Occidental this week in the face of a threat by other farmers to resist it.

As speculations swirled about their installation in a 144-hectare property in Hacienda Velez-Malaga in La Castellana town today, the beneficiaries greeted with shock a report that the widow of their slain colleague, Pepito Santillan, died yesterday.

"I feel happy but at the same time apprehensive. There's a statement from landowner Cuenca's worker saying to the effect that we'd only be installed over their dead bodies. And there are reports that they're mobilizing people for a prayer rally," Florinda Hilario, 48, said in an interview.

A group of mostly elderly women sang songs for Hilario and the rest of the 22 beneficiaries on their 14th day of hunger strike in a makeshift tent outside the gate of the Department of Agrarian Reform office yesterday morning.

While heartened by the outpouring of support, the beneficiaries could not celebrate yet their impending installation after years of struggle in view of the strong resistance posed by farmers loyal to landowner Robert Cuenca.

"Over our dead body. Let's count the dead in case it happens," Rodolfo Tupas, president of the Malaga-Cuenca Multi-Purpose Cooperative, was quoted as having said in the on-line version of Sun.Star Bacolod.

Pangandaman had vowed since last week to install the 122 farmer-beneficiaries, including the 22 on hunger strike outside the DAR, this week but kept the date secret to preempt any plan by farmers loyal to Cuenca to block this.

The hunger strikers believed that they would be installed today. Some of them, including Jose Gerry Cahilig, had gone home for the installation, but the rest opted to stay behind and press ahead with the strike until their representatives were installed.

The INQUIRER tried to confirm today's installation but Pangandaman did not reply.

Policemen and Army soldiers would be deployed in the area to secure the farmers during the installation. The police would also set up a police precinct after the installation to keep law and order, according to the Secretary.

"If Cuenca unleashes his goons on us, we will not back down especially if we see that the DAR people will stand up for us," a weak Hilario said in an interview at their tent.

Of the 122 who were granted a collective certificate of land ownership (CLOA) to the 144-hectare land in 2002, 102 belong to the Task Force Mapalad (TFM), while the rest are identified with the management.

The 22 beneficiaries, who had camped outside the DAR office last Feb. 20 and went on hunger strike the next day in protest of Pangandaman's failure to install them a number of times since late last year, are part of the TFM.

"Don't treat us as your enemy. We are not your enemy. Join us and together we will fight for your right to own your land," Edna Sobrecarny, spokesperson of TFM-Negros, said in an appeal to Cuenca's farm workers.

Hacienda Velez-Malaga has a total land area of 446 hectares, including the 144 hectares covered by the CLOA. The remaining 301 hectares has also been placed under the coverage of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, and is available to the 189 members of Cuenca's cooperative, she said.

The TFM also reported that Elsie Santillan, 59, died yesterday morning after vomiting blood in their home inside the hacienda. The cause of her death wasn't immediately known. She was the widow of Pepito Santillan who was gunned down allegedly by Cuenca's security men in front of their home in the hacienda before dawn Jan. 25.

Their son, Pepito Jr., was among the 22 on hunger strike at the DAR. 30

Satur, Bayan Muna sue petitioners

By Margaux C. Ortiz

PARTY-LIST ORGANIZATION BAYAN MUNA AND its president Rep. Satur Ocampo yesterday filed a civil case against four Nueva Ejica residents who had petitioned the Commission on Elections for their disqualification, demanding the payment of damages amounting to at least P3 million.

In their complaint filed before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, the plaintiffs said they have suffered quantifiable damages as a result of the defendants' "misuse of legal processes" and the publication of statements that they claim are "utterly false."

Defendants' Medelyn Felipe, Cleotilde Aguilar, Julie Flores Sinohin and Jose Princillo had accused Bayan Muna and the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military wing the New People's Army (NPA) of harassing them when they chose to support Akbayan during the 1998 elections.

Felipe also charged Ocampo and party-list leaders Liza Maza, Teodoro Casiño and Rafael Mariano of ordering the death of her husband.

"What they said were all lies," Bayan Muna Rep. said Ocampo.

"How could we do that when Bayan Muna was formed only a year later, in 1999?" Ocampo countered.

Ocampo also belied Felipe and her companions' statements that Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela again intimidated them in 2001.

ELECTION '07

Loren, Lim court Chinoys votes

SHE'LL BE THEIR GOOD-LUCK CHARM IN THE Senate.

In her campaign in Binondo, Manila, former Sen. Loren Legarda said being born on a Chinese New Year day would make her lucky to the Filipino-Chinese.

Legarda, who was born in the Year of the Pig, said she was so used to "cutting ribbons" for store openings because she was thought to bring good fortune.

Clad in white polo and jeans, the petite opposition candidate shook hands with residents and kibitzers on Yuchengco and Ongpin Streets, with Sen. Alfredo Lim, former Rep. Harry Angping and wife Naida Angping in tow.

Legarda vowed to pass laws that will stem the tide of rising criminality in the country, which will in turn protect the Filipino-Chinese community.

Allison W. Lopez

The other Cayetano a no-show

SENATORIAL CANDIDATE, JOSELITO PEPITO Cayetano, was a no-show at the hearing for the disqualification petition filed against him at the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

His non-appearance at the hearing "bordered on contempt," and nearly proved that his was a "sham candidacy," said lawyer Leila de Lima, representing opposition senatorial candidate, Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano who filed the disqualification petition against his namesake.

De Lima said that a check with his neighbors in Sasa, Davao City, revealed that Joselito Pepito's nickname was "Jojo" and not "Peter." KBL president Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr. has also denied fielding Joselito as a KBL candidate, she added. *Nikko Dizon*

Unity bets undergo drug test

AT LEAST FIVE ADMINISTRATION CANDIDATES IN the Team Unity senatorial ticket have submitted themselves to a drug test and challenged candidates in the Genuine Opposition (GO) to do the same.

Those found negative of prohibited drugs are Ilocos Sur Gov. Chavit Singson, Rep. Prospero Pichay, Sen. Ralph Recto and former Sen. Tito Sotto.

Yesterday, Muslim teammate Sultan Jamalul Kiram did the same at the St. Peter-Paul Medical Clinic in Ermita, Manila, a drug test laboratory in Mabini, Manila. He also tested negative.

Senatorial bets Edgardo Angara and Joker Arroyo, Reps. Mike Defensor and Miguel Zubiri, Vic Magsaysay, Tessie Oreta, and Cesar Montano are also scheduled to undergo drug testing this week.

Cynthia D. Balana

Goma willing to debate

MOVIE ACTOR RICHARD GOMEZ IS WILLING TO join any public debates if only to divert "too much focus" on the candidates of the Team Unity and Genuine Opposition.

Gomez, who is running for the Senate as an independent, said that for someone like him who entered politics with an advocacy, he would gladly accept any invitation to discuss political issues in public.

Gomez ran and won under the party-list Mamamayan Ayaw sa Droga (MAD) in 2001. The partly-list won three seats for Congress, but was unable to get a seat in Congress. *Santiago R. Alcantara*

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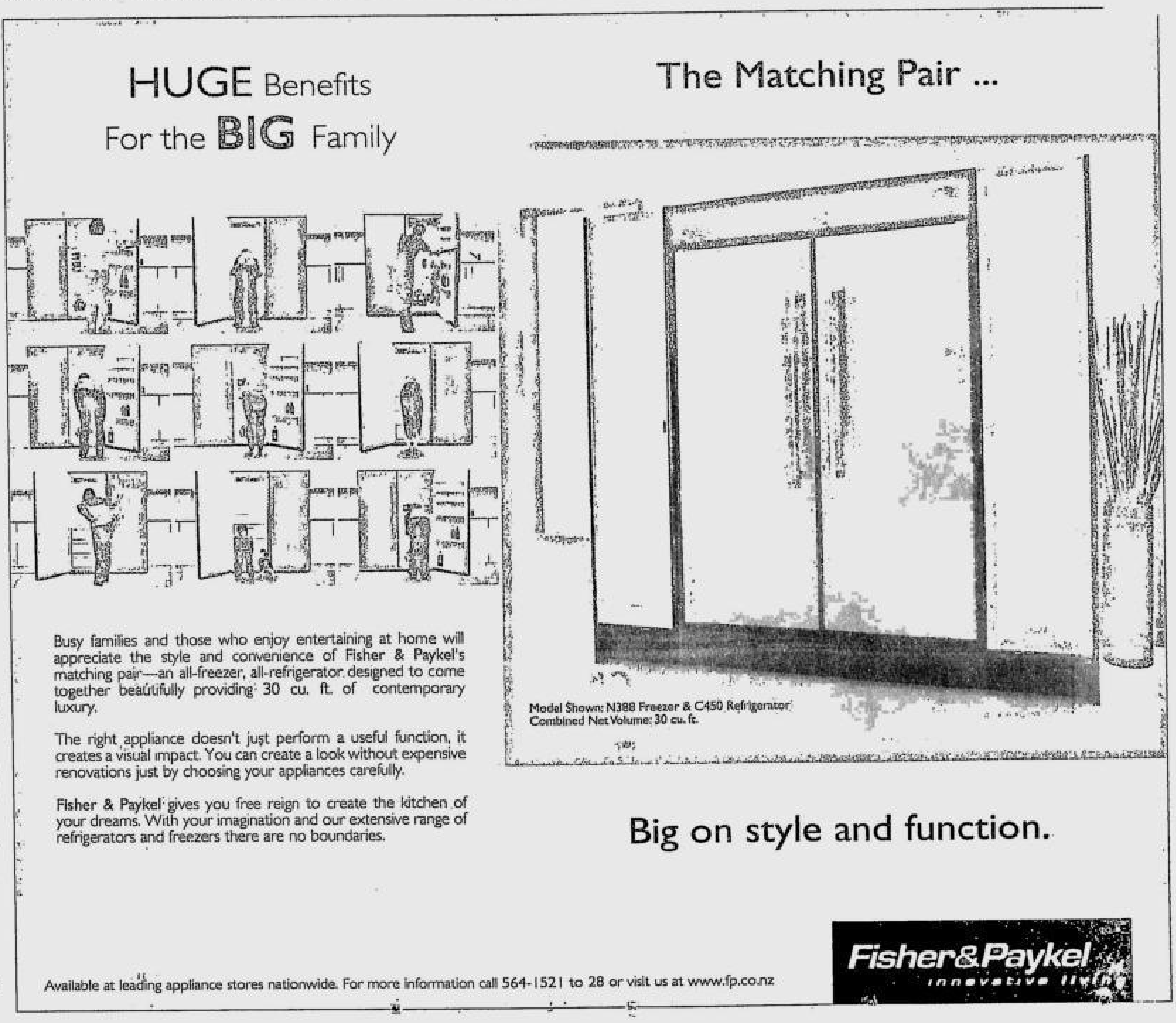
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Ombudsman to file criminal raps vs 2 nursing board members

By Volt Contreras

IT ALL BEGAN WHEN A GROUP of nursing graduates in Baguio, taking last year's board exams, finished the test well ahead of the rest. Apart from their stunning speed, they shared something else in common: They wore "jackets" bearing the name of their review center, RA Gapuz.

Citing this very first hint of something fishy about the 2006 exams, the Office of the Ombudsman has approved the filing of criminal charges against two public officials who allegedly "leaked" the questions not only to the Gapuz reviewees in Baguio but to "other parts of the country."

Ombudsman Ma. Merceditas Gutierrez yesterday announced that Anesia Buenafe-Dionisio and Virginia Diolola-Madeja, then members of the Professional Regulatory Commission's Board of Nursing, are to be charged with graft at the Sandiganbayan.

Madeja was then the assigned examiner in the portion of the exams dealing with Medical Surgery Nursing (Test 3), while Dionisio handled the questionnaires on Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing (Test 5). *(See related stories on Page A1.)*

NBI investigation

The PRC had initially filed a complaint over the leakage before the National Bureau of Investigation on July 13, 2006. In September that year, the NBI filed a report for the Ombudsman's consideration, pinning down Madeja and Dionisio.

In a statement, the Ombudsman's office recalled that an investigating committee created by the PRC had noted that Madeja provided "keywords" through handwritten notes distributed to Gapuz reviewees and other unidentified recipients.

The so-called keywords were for "56 situations," five of which accounted for "a total of 25 questions (that) actually came out in the National Licensure Exams in the subject of Medical Surgery Nursing (Test 3)," according to a copy of the resolution obtained by the INQUIRER.

Dionisio also allegedly prepared up to 500 "test questions" that had both handwritten and computer-printed versions, "majority (of which) were shown to have reached the reviewees."

A total of "90 questions" reflected in Dionisio's notes eventually came out "among the 100 questions" asked in Test 5, the document noted.

The Ombudsman noted that even at the level of the NBI, investigators have already dismissed, for lack of proof, Dionisio's defense that her manuscripts containing the test questions got lost and that whoever found them started the leak.

The NBI also junked Madeja's defense that the questions she prepared were just "maliciously reproduced when she went to a computer shop."

Solon in total denial despite CGFNS rebuff

From page A1

giving up on the decision by the US Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) to deny VisaScreen applications to those who passed the tainted June 2006 nursing board exam.

In an overseas phone interview, the Bacolod representative said he was looking at two options to keep the June batch from having to retake Tests 3 and 5 if they wish to go to the United States as had been required by the US panel.

The Philippines could either elevate the appeal to the US Congress or seek similar accreditation agencies that could allow the entry of Filipino nurses in the United States, Puentevella said.

"I will discuss the two options with the President as soon as I return," Puentevella told the INQUIRER yesterday. The head of the four-member mission to the United States is due to arrive in Manila today, along with Professional Regulation Commission chair Leonor Rosero.

Rep. Janette Garin (1st District, Iloilo) said that subsequent appeals would just "bury us deeper into the mud."

"I hope they would stop and just focus on what to do," she told the INQUIRER. "These people are making a mockery out of our nursing profession. They are just (worsening) the leakage problem."

Retake and move on

An examinee who finished in the June 2006 exam's Top 10 also disapproved of a protracted appeal.

"Why don't we just all retake the exams and move on with our lives?" the angry examinee said, noting that the Alliance of New Nurses headed by Renato Aquino was not exactly speaking for the predominant sentiment of the June batch.

In case President Macapagal-Arroyo approves the appeal to the US Congress, Puentevella said he would ask the Philippine House of Representatives to transmit his resolution supporting the Philippine action to address the leakage controversy.

He claimed that the resolution had been signed by "almost" 100 representatives after he circulated it during the two-day special congressional session last month.

He said the CGFNS denial of the Philippine appeal might have been connected with the entry of the National Council on Licensure Examinations in the country last month.

Pressed for elaboration, he replied: "I can't. That's speculative. They (CGFNS and NCLEX) have the same objectives to become the medium of foreign nurses to go to the US. This is what we learned."

Federal law governs

A number of American states require foreign nursing graduates to take up both the NCLEX and the CGFNS before they could work there. The designation of the Philippines as an NCLEX site would drastically reduce the cost of taking the exam for Filipino nurses.

Puentevella, however, pointed out that the CGFNS came out with its decision only months after its officials visited the Philippines in September to look into the leakage problem.

Earlier, Puentevella said he was looking into the possibility that the CGFNS had been "fed with wrong information."

In the meeting with the CGFNS last March 5, he said the Philippine delegation brought up the issue, noting that both the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals were yet to decide on the matter when the commission's representatives were in the country.

"They told us that it didn't make much difference," he said. "They said that they follow their own federal laws. They said that while they respected what we had done and admired our educational system, they feared that the controversy might become a precedent for other countries with similar problems."

So much noise

Despite the denial, the lawmaker said the trip to Philadelphia should teach the Philippines a valuable lesson: "What we learned is that if only we contained our problem in the Philippines," he said, "it would not have reached this level."

Quoting CGFNS officials, he said the Philippines made "so much noise and blew your horns so hard" that the issue inevitably caught the attention of the commission.

GMA orders test retake, to pay for every taker's P900 fee

From page A1

every examinee.

The President yesterday ordered Labor Secretary Arturo Brion to lay down the mechanics for the retake of Tests 3 and 5.

This followed the rejection by the US Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) of a last-ditch appeal of a team led by Rep. Monico Puentevella to reconsider its decision to deny VisaScreen Certificates to those who passed the 2006 exams.

The Puentevella team went to Philadelphia despite a statement by the CGFNS that such a mission would be futile. *(Story on Page A1.)*

"This morning, I talked to Art Brion, I told him (to) already explain the mechanics of the partial retake. Remember it's only Tests 3 and 5," the President said.

She said Brion would coordinate where the takers would register and take their review.

"But it is voluntary if they want to go to the US because it's the US that's not accepting them. So if they are accepted in Malaysia or England or in a hospital in the Philippines, that's fine," Ms Arroyo said in an interview in Malacañang.

"Brion is going to meet with the deans of the nursing schools this week to determine where the review centers will be and then we will also give some subsidy because we don't know that all of them participated in the leakage so we have to give them some subsidy, we have to give them the benefit of the doubt," the President said.

Gov't to shoulder fee

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government will shoulder the P900 fee for the retake. Ermita said the President had withheld the issuance of an order for the partial retake in deference to the mission of Puentevella.

He said that with the reported failure of the congressional appeal, Brion would submit to the President a draft executive order (EO) for the partial and voluntary retake of Tests 3 and 5 for US-bound Filipino nurses.

Ermita said the retake would still be administered by the Professional Regulations Commission but the Department of Labor would certify the compliance to the CGFNS.

Some 42,000 students took the nursing examination last year but only about 17,000 passed.

The CGFNS issued a temporary ban on the 17,000 last month, insisting that Filipino nurses retake sections of the 2006 examination where mass cheating took place.

Guidelines

Brion told reporters that his department had started working on guidelines for the exam retake. "Hopefully, this retake will be the final and closing chapter of our June 2006 nursing board exam traumatic experience," he said.

He said the application for voluntary test shall be filed with the PRC using the same administrative procedures that regular nursing graduates who wanted to take the board exam undergo.

Brion said he would meet this week with the deans of nursing schools who will conduct the review for the voluntary examinees.

"We will also formulate with the deans guidelines on the conduct of the review and settle how the government's assistance shall be handled," he said. *With reports from Jerome Aning, Edson Tandoc, AFP*

RP tops international survey of senior women executives

From page A1

countries surveyed.

The results for the Philippines, released here by Grant Thornton member firm Punongbayan & Araullo (P&A), represented a 13-percent increase from 2004, and were significantly higher than the global average of 59 percent.

The survey canvassed opinions among 7,200 privately held firms in 32 countries, representing 81 percent of global gross domestic product.

The survey involved face-to-face interviews among 150 companies in the Philippines. It was limited to owner-managed companies employing between 100 and 500 people. It did not say anything about the size of the assets of the companies.

Japan bottom of list

Following the Philippines on the rankings were mainland China with 91 percent; Malaysia, 85 percent; Brazil, 83 percent; Hong Kong, 83 percent; Thailand, 81 percent; Taiwan, 80 percent; South Africa, 77 percent; Botswana, 74 percent and Russia, 73 percent.

At the bottom of the list was Japan, where only 25 percent of businesses had women in top positions. Also ranked low were the Netherlands, 27 percent; Luxembourg, 37 percent; Germany, 41 percent and Italy, 42 percent.

The survey also showed that 50 percent of people holding senior management positions in Philippine companies were women, compared to the global average of just 22 percent. There was just 39 percent two years ago.

Not surprising

"This is no surprise to us, but it is always welcome to get confirmation that here in the Philippines, the proverbial glass ceiling that blocks women from top management positions has long been broken," said P&A managing partner and CEO Greg Navarro.

At P&A itself, six of the 17 partners are women and half of the top executives are female.

Lily Linsangan, P&A's first female partner and head of the firm's Business Risk Services Group, said there was equal opportunity for men and women to go up the corporate ladder in the Philippines because Philippine society was basically matriarchal.

"Culturally, Filipino families are basically maternal. The mother is very highly regarded and her power is felt, from the way the children are disciplined to the way the household is run," Linsangan said in a statement.

"Eventually, when these children move on to the business world and become professionals, they carry with them that respect for women," Linsangan said.

According to Navarro, women executives in the Philippines are supported by their extended families, allowing them to combine work with family life.

The Grant & Thornton survey results are supported by data from the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics, which showed that women have been steadily outnumbering men in executive positions over the past four years.

In 2002, there were 1.34 million men holding supervisory and executive positions, against 1.79 million women. By 2005, the gap had widened, with 2.1 million women against 1.59 million men in top positions.

Showing similar results was the MasterCard MasterIndex of Women's Advancement for 2007, where the Philippines posted the highest index score of 87.43 among Asian countries included in the survey.

First in Asia

Taiwan followed with 82.19; Singapore, 75.92; Hong Kong, 75.83; China, 75.59; Thailand, 75.29; Vietnam, 72.18; Korea, 65.12; Indonesia, 61.09 and Malaysia, 57.91. Japan brought up the rear with an index score of 46.93 percent.

The index scores measure, among other things, how optimistic women are about holding managerial positions and how they feel about their place in the workforce.

A score of 100 indicates equality between the sexes.

Last year, the Philippines had the highest index score of 90.9. It dipped to 87.43 this year, but it was still enough for the Philippines to rank first in Asia.

New Zealand emerged the leader this year with an index score of 89.85, up from 83.91 last year.

Asian women making big inroads, says US group

WASHINGTON, D.C.—WOMEN are assuming greater political leadership and business ownership in Asia but remain under-represented in national-level government, says a US group with deep roots in the region.

In an assessment ahead of International Women's Day today, the Asia Foundation noted "important progress" in reform of laws and policies concerning women in the region as a result of global pressure as well as actions by Asian women groups themselves.

"The good news is, despite their under-representation in national level government, women are nonetheless becoming a significant political force in many countries and are gaining ground—particularly at the local level," Carol Yost, director of the foundation's women's empowerment program, told Agence France Presse.

"While there is still a long way to go to achieve parity, the overall trend in women's full and equal participation in political processes and public life is positive," Yost said.

Across Asia, women hold an average of only 16.4 percent of parliamentary seats and own about 30 percent of small and medium enterprises, according to statistics culled by the non-profit foundation.

There have been several notable government or opposition women leaders in Asia. Among the current lot are Philippine President Macapagal-Arroyo, Burma democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi and India's ruling Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi. *AFP*

Rare Palawan dolphins now down to 47—WWF

From page A1

er, the dolphins inhabit coastal, brackish and fresh waters of tropical and subtropical Indo-Pacific. Their territory stretches from Australia and New Guinea to the Bay of Bengal, including the Irrawaddy, Mahaka, Mekong, Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers.

Although their range seems vast, actual distribution is relatively fragmented—with some populations only dozens strong.

This has prompted the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources to classify them globally as endangered.

Critically endangered

The Philippine population, being isolated and extremely vulnerable, is classified as critically endangered—the highest risk category for any animal species.

In 1986, a thriving colony was discovered in the inner portion of Malampaya Sound, south of El Nido and west of Taytay. After a thorough assessment, the population was pegged at 77 individuals.

Unfortunately, the age-old tendency to inhabit shallow coastal areas has made the Irrawaddy especially vulnerable to human activities.

Twenty-five years after their discovery, the future of the Irrawaddy is still far from assured. Despite tireless efforts at conservation by organizations like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Philippines), a number of dolphins continue to die every year.

Two have already succumbed this year. Last year, from May to August alone, five dolphins drowned as bycatch. All were entangled in a wide range of fishing gear—from purse seine nets to crab pots.

Dolphins belong to the mammalian order Cetacea, which means that every so often, they need to resurface for air.

Each month more people come to Malampaya, lured by the bounty of its rich waters. Many use traps that are left untended across great swathes of the Sound.

Ever curious, the Irrawaddies play amid the traps. Inevitably, some become entangled in nets.

"The sheer saturation of these traps is the greatest threat to the Irrawaddy's survival," says WWF project manager Mavic Matillano.

Other sites where the Irrawaddy can be found, such as the Mekong Delta in Indochina and in the Mahakam River in India, are experiencing similar bycatch problems.

Four dead each year

From the initial population of 77, the current number of dolphins is estimated to have gone down to 47. A loss of so great a number—30 confirmed individuals—in just two decades is a cause for alarm.

To stop the trend, the Irrawaddy Dolphin Recovery Plan was crafted in 2003. The plan included the development and implementation of policies regulating the use of fishing gear with high incidence of bycatch.

WWF documentation of dolphin mortality yielded an average of four Irrawaddy deaths per year. The number of deaths has been steadily increasing.

Although catching crabs and other sustenance fishing methods have been identified as the main culprits for dolphin deaths, they are among the fishery activities that are legally allowed in the Sound.

Malampaya's fisherfolk, completely reliant on the sea for sustenance, have yet to shift to alternative methods of catching fish.

Multi-sectoral approach

Fortunately, more steps are being taken to minimize dolphin deaths. Using a multi-sectoral approach, WWF and other groups such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the municipality of Taytay are developing fishery policies to enhance livelihood opportunities, law enforcement and environmental awareness.

These policies have been designed to alleviate the intensive and unsustainable fishing methods.

Ecotourism is also being considered as a primary source of livelihood.

Trekking, mangrove tours

"Malampaya has good potential. It offers trekking, mangrove tours and, of course, dolphin watching. The revenues from these activities will be able to partially fund enforcement teams for the area," Matillano said.

He said families might rely less on fishing if they found new sources of income. "This should help reduce the number of traps in the Sound," the WWF project manager said.

Ultimately, the fate of Malampaya Sound's Irrawaddy Dolphins depends on the people themselves.

Without their willingness to accommodate this species, a new dawn cannot break for the beleaguered Irrawaddy.

Kiko No. 1, edges Loren in latest poll

From page A1

sincerely committed to genuine change and reforms in our politics and political leadership.

"Our message will continue to be a call to reject "politics as usual" and usher in a new kind of politics for our nation. We need to restore our faith in each other, in our institutions, in our democracy."

PANGILINAN: From No. 3 to the top

LEGARDA: From No. 1 to No. 2

Following the three were Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter Cayetano and Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who were tied at rank 4-5 (43 percent). Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero tied with reelectionist Sen. Ralph Recto at rank 6-7 (37 percent).

Only Recto is with the administration's Team Unity. The rest are part of the Genuine Opposition.

The survey was conducted Feb. 24 to 27, using face-to-face interviews of 1,200 registered voters divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, and had a margin of error of plus-minus 3 percentage points.

At rank 8 was former Sen. Vicente Sotto III (31 percent), who is with Recto on the Team Unity slate. Tied at rank 9-10 were former Sen John Osmeña and Tarlac Rep. Benigno Aquino III (30 percent), who are also with GO.

Independent candidate Gregorio Honasan was 11th (29 percent), and Team Unity's Sen. Joker Arroyo was 12th (28 percent).

Also within the bounds of statistical error were Team Unity's Sen. Edgardo Angara (27 percent) and GO's Aquilino Pimentel III (26 percent).

8-4 or 10-2 for opposition

"The survey points to at least an 8-4, and at most a 10-2, score in favor of non-[Team Unity] candidates as of the end of February," SWS said in a statement.

Go claims credit

A significant distance away were: 15. Michael Defensor (Team Unity), 16. Sonia Roco (GO), 17. Juan Miguel Zubiri (Team Unity), 18-19. Cesar Montano (Team Unity) and Richard Gomez (Ind.), 20. Vicente Magsaysay (Team Unity), 21. Anna Dominique Coseteng (GO), 22-24. Prospero Pichay Jr. (Team Unity), Antonio Trillanes (GO), and Teresa Aquino-Oreta (Team Unity), and 25. Luis Singson (Team Unity).

A GO spokesperson has attributed reelectionist Pangilinan's No. 1 to his being identified with the opposition during the first two weeks of the campaign.

"If I am not mistaken the survey was taken before we dropped him" as guest candidate on Feb. 28," said lawyer Adel Tamano. "Yes, of course that was a factor (Pangilinan's initially being with the GO ticket)," he said.

Tamano nevertheless said "we are happy with" Pangilinan's strong showing. "Our coalition with the Liberal Party is still strong," he stressed.

Gainers

Gainers from the previous November 2006 survey include Pangilinan (from third to first), Villar (from seventh to third), Cayetano (tied for fifth to tied-fourth), Escudero (from 10th to tied-sixth), Osmeña and Aquino (from tied-12th to tied-ninth), Arroyo (from tied-12th to solo 12th) and Roco (from 17th to 16th), SWS said.

The SWS surveys of the second, third and fourth quarters of 2006 were conducted over June 22 to 28, Sept. 24 to Oct. 2 and Nov. 24 to 28, respectively. *With a report from Dona Pazzibugan*

Joma, Satur ...

From page A1

cial prosecutor last Feb. 28.

"It is now up to our law enforcers to arrest them," Abando, told the INQUIRER.

15 counts, no bail

Sison and the other accused were charged with 15 counts of murder with no bail.

The case against Sison and the other accused was filed with the Provincial Prosecutor's Office in Baybay town, 110 km from here, on Oct. 30, 2006 by the Philippine National Police in Eastern Visayas legal office, headed by Chief Insp. George Almaden.

The multiple murder case stemmed from the discovery of a mass grave in in Sapang Daku, Barangay Caulisihan, an upstream village in Inopacan town on Aug. 26, 2006.

Military investigators said the 67 skeletal remains found in the site were victims of a communist party purge of suspected spies in its ranks in the 1980s.

Only 15 remains were identified by their relatives.

The information sent to the court said the accused members of the central, regional and provincial committees of the NDF-CPP-NPA were to be blamed for the murders as they were allegedly the ones who ordered the purge.

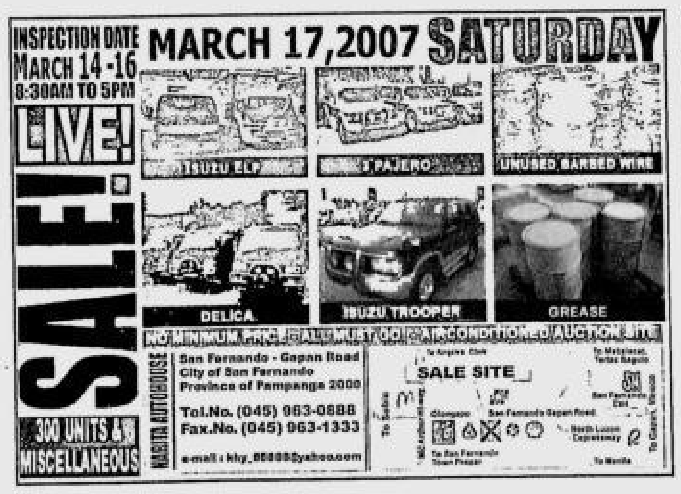
Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, who visited the site last year, had said that all the top officials of CPP must be held accountable for the "animalistic, barbaric and gruesome" killings. He said the purging could not have happened without a directive from Sison and the rest of the top officials of NDF and the CPP-NPA.

The military said the mass grave in what was said to be the main camp of the CPP-NPA's Southern Leyte Front Command, were killed during the "purging years" from 1984 to 1986.

'Fake' mass graves

"The (purging) operation was dubbed by the communist organization as Oplan: Venereal Disease," Col. Allan Ragpala, commanding officer of 802nd Infantry Brigade, had earlier told the INQUIRER.

Fr. Rafael Salas, spokesperson of the CPP in Eastern Visayas, in a previous e-mail sent to the INQUIRER, had denied that they were responsible for the killings. He claimed that the Inopacan mass grave was "fake" and "the handiwork of the military as part of its propaganda campaign against the rebel movement."



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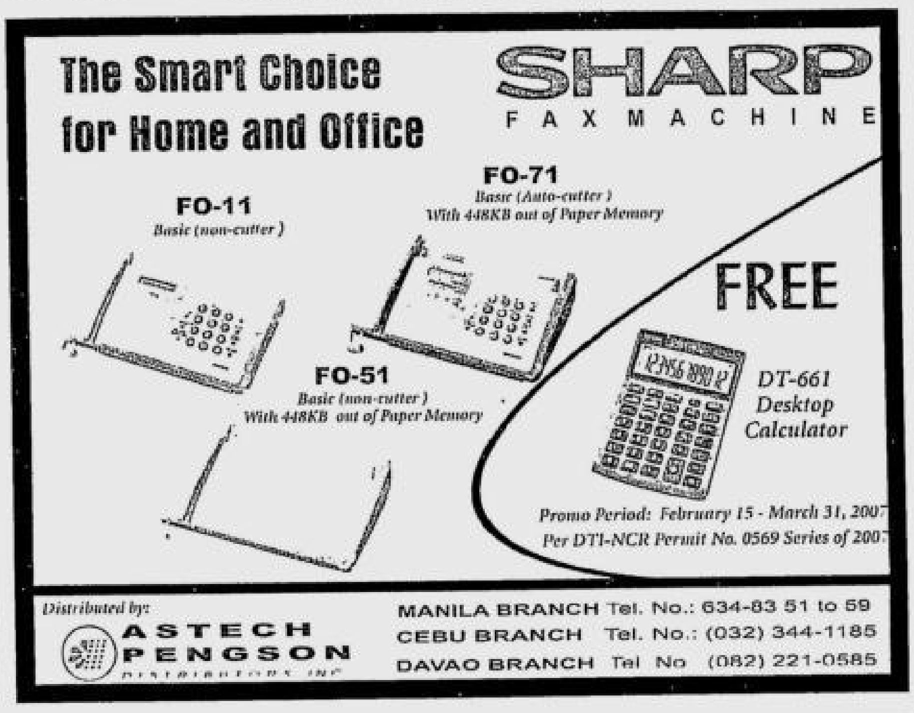

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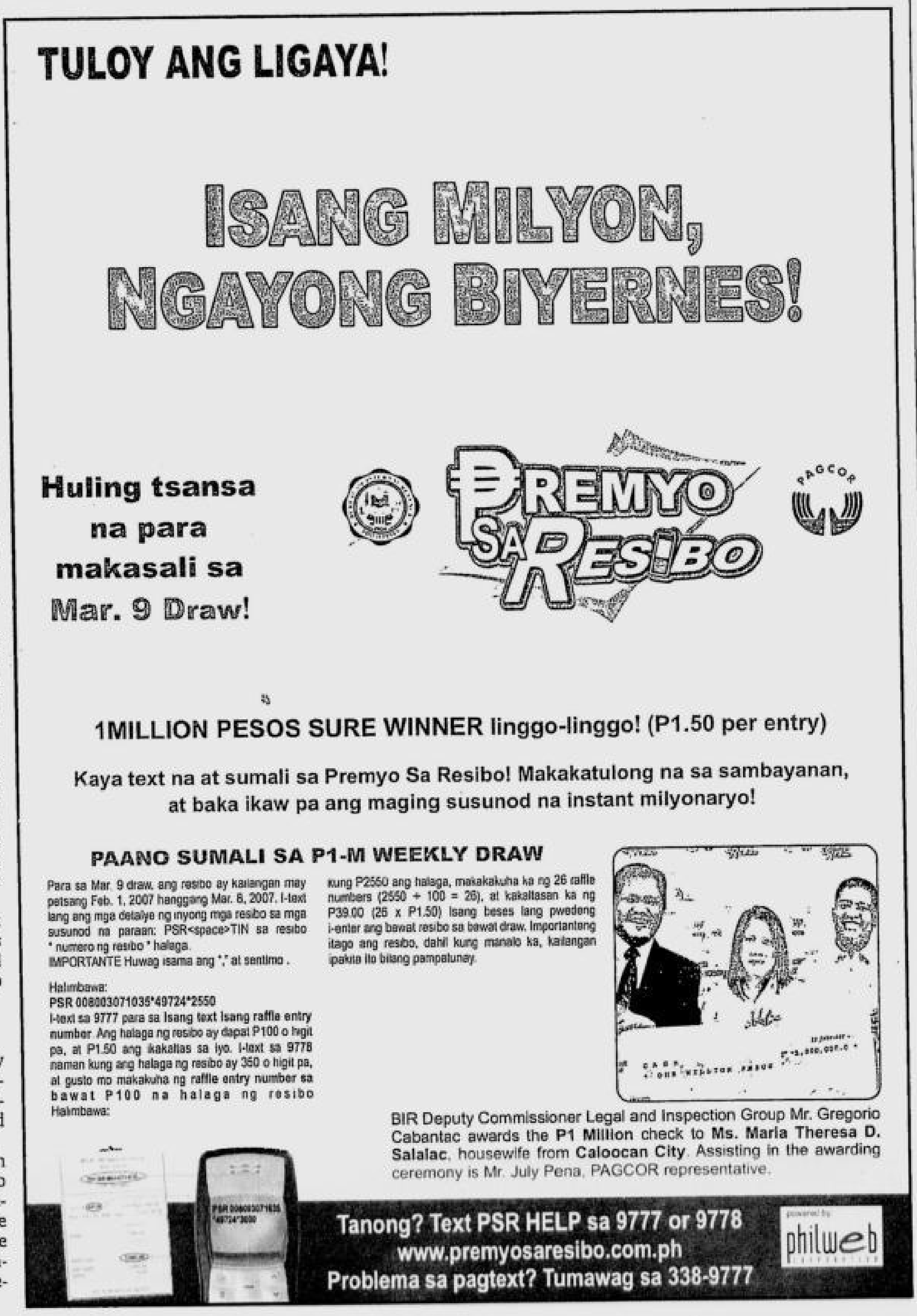

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BIR Deputy Commissioner Legal and Inspection Group Mr. Gregorio Cabantac awards the **P1 Million** check to **Ms. Maria Theresa D. Salalac**, housewife from **Caloocan City**. Assisting in the awarding ceremony is Mr. July Pena, PAGCOR representative.

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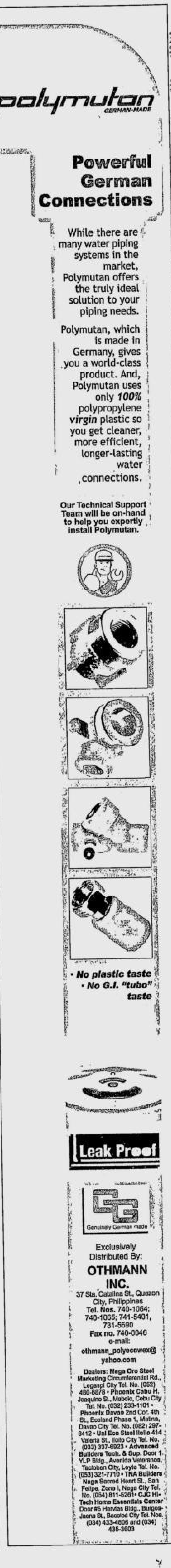

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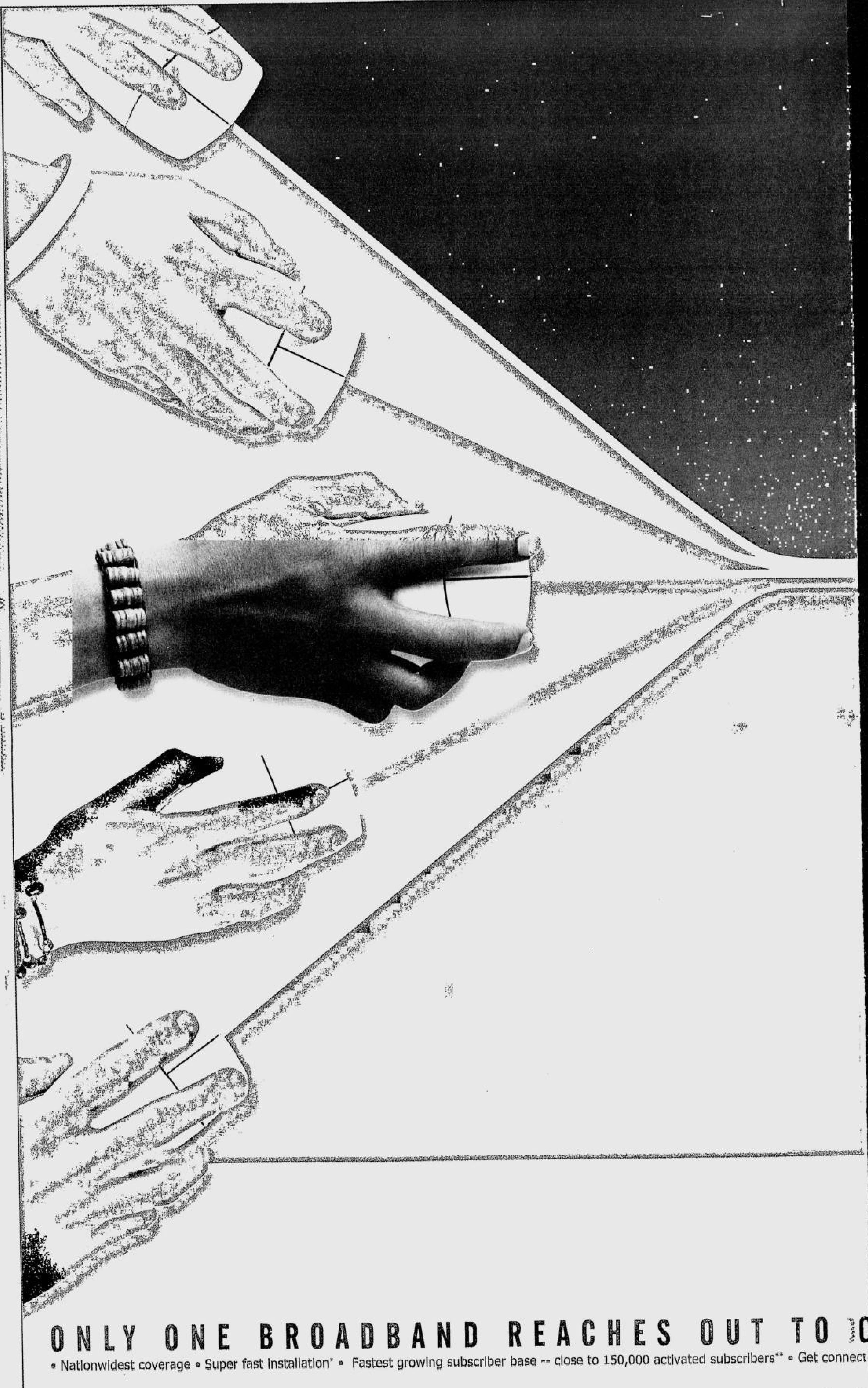

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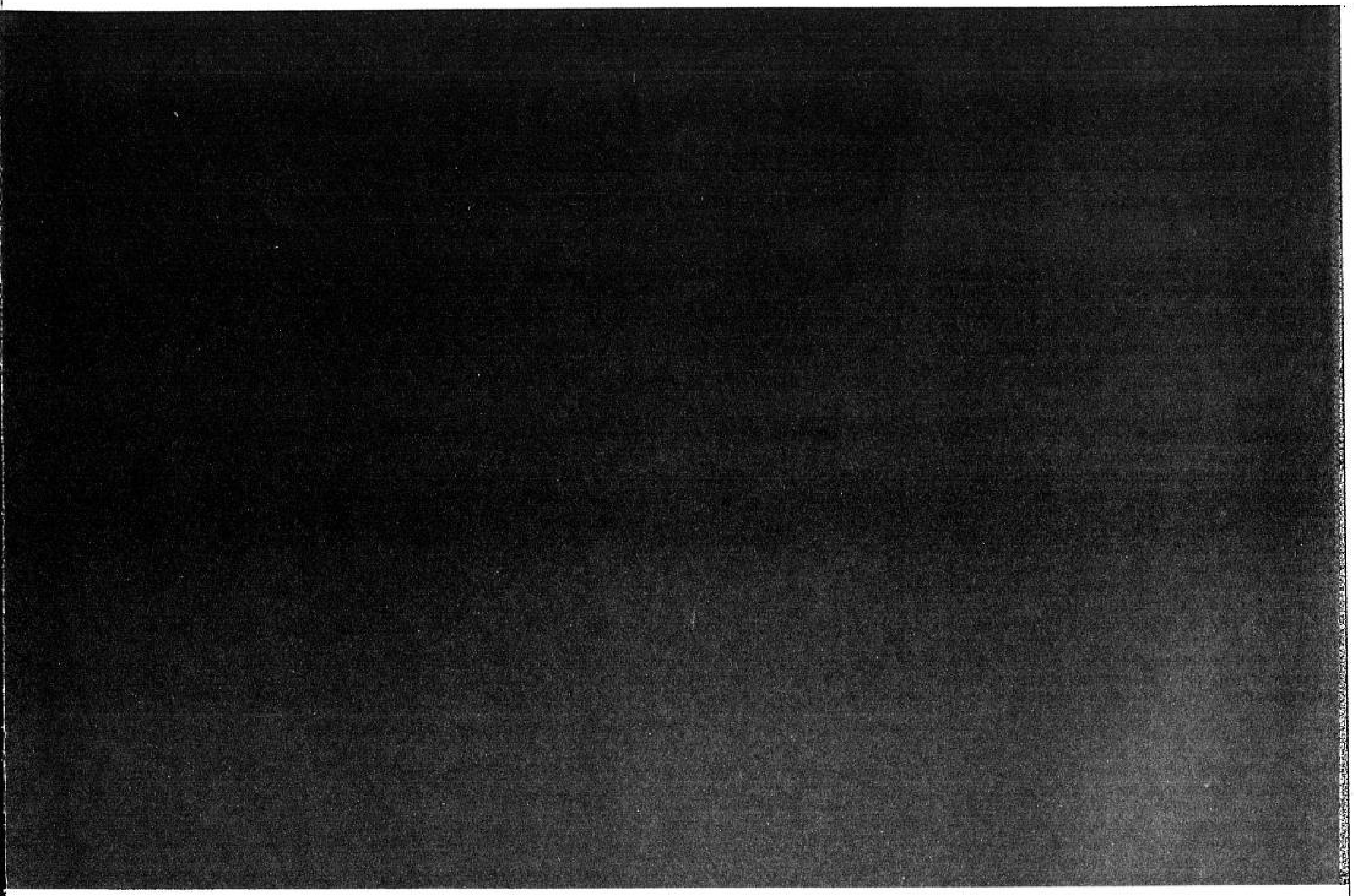

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Concrete proof

EDITORIAL

THERE JUST SEEMS TO BE NO END TO THE TROUBLES hounding Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. Already embroiled in legal disputes that have reached international courts of arbitration, Naia Terminal 3 has been found to have a potentially more serious problem. Two engineering consulting companies hired by the government—one local, the other foreign—have declared the terminal structurally unsound and recommended against opening it for operation this month as scheduled.

The local firm, TCGI Engineers Inc., said that while its foundation was stable, the terminal, as constructed, does not conform with "the original design intent." It recommended "remediation works" on a number of beams, girders, post-tension slabs, columns and piles. It urged that the opening of the terminal be suspended in the meantime, saying that even its limited operation would expose to "life safety risks" passengers, airport personnel, well-wishers and other users of the facility.

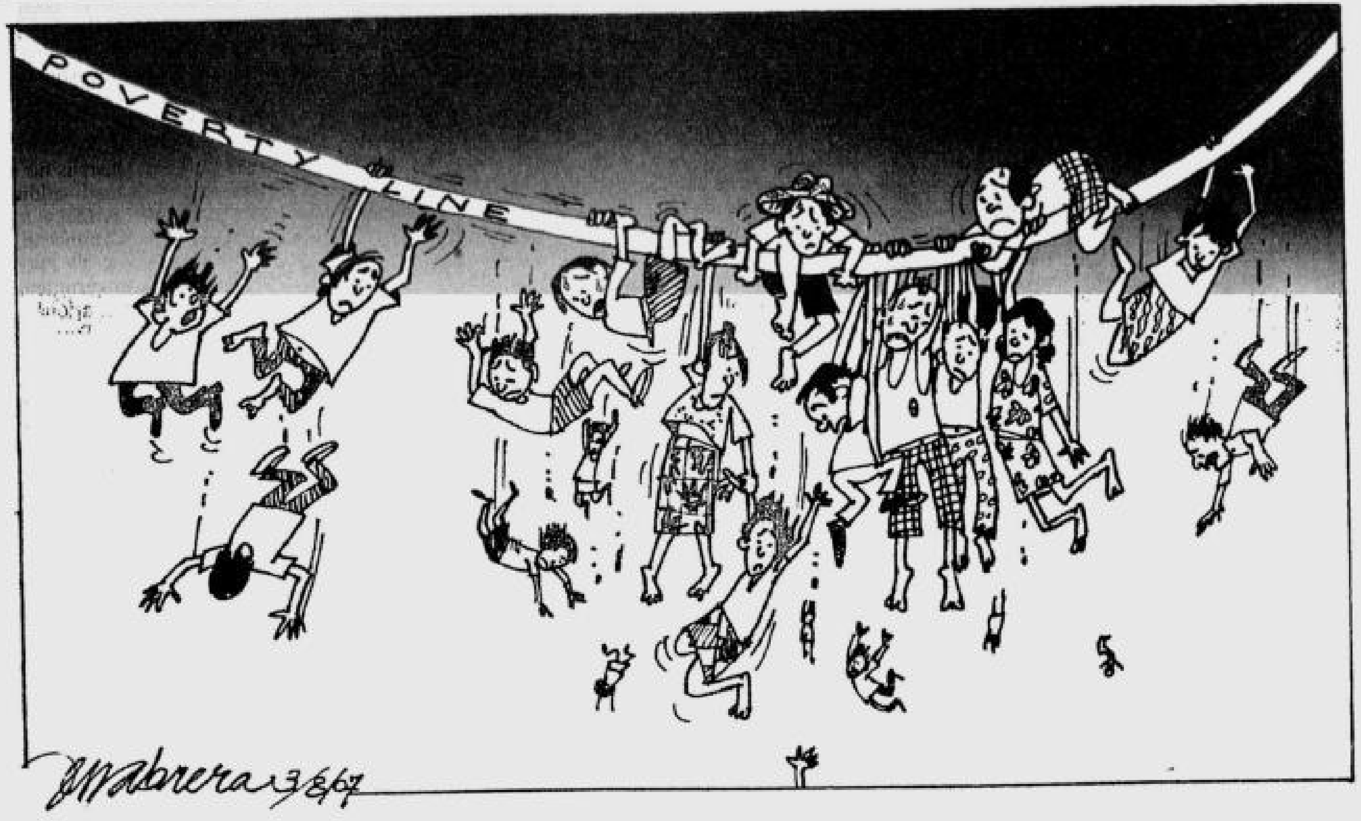
The Hong Kong-based Ove Arup & Partners HK Ltd. stressed the importance of correcting fully the structural defects it identified before the facility could be opened. Otherwise, it said, operating the terminal even on a limited scale could expose users to safety risks.

To their credit, officials of the Manila International Airport Authority readily accepted the recommendations of the engineering consultants and promptly announced that the opening of the terminal would be postponed. Malacañang likewise appeared resigned to another delay in the opening of Naia Terminal 3, with Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita saying, "It is better to err on the side of safety. Better late than sorry."

In fact, the government should welcome the discovery of the defects before the much-anticipated opening of the terminal. It may have spared the nation from a tragedy of unimaginable proportions. The engineering experts are not talking about leaking roofs, such as those found in the Cebu International Convention Center, which can cause no greater harm than getting some people drenched and making faces of officials red with embarrassment. They are talking about major structural defects that could turn a showcase of modernity into one huge mausoleum for thousands, should a strong earthquake occur.

There is another reason for looking at the alarming findings of the engineering consultants as something fortuitous. In its decision voiding the five contracts awarded to the Philippine International Air Terminals Co., the Supreme Court said these contracts violated Philippine laws and public policy. The Court noted irregularities in the bidding and awarding of the contracts, such as Piatco's lack of financial capacity to undertake the project and the substantial amendments made on the original Concession Agreement. Now, the government can add to its charges of corruption and fraud in the awarding of the contract, charges of fraud and deceit in the construction itself. And this time, it has literally concrete proof to support the charges. If anything can clinch the case against Piatco and the other members of the consortium, as well as the contractors who built the terminal, in both local and foreign court, this should be it.

Worse than bribery or overpricing, Piatco has been found to have compromised the safety of passengers and other users of the terminal. If for this reason alone, it doesn't deserve to be paid even a tiny fraction of the $650 million it has been demanding from the government.



JMabrera 3/8/07

'Mine eyes glaze over'

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

SHRIVELING AWAY DUE TO SHORT FOOD rations is not the stuff of headlines. Not even TV footage of rough coffins holding shrunken infants can jostle aside candidates smirking for newscast cameras.

But do these explain Mego? "My-eyes-glaze-over" reaction met the government's failure to achieve all its self-imposed targets to wrestle down undernutrition, notes University of the Philippines professor Cecilia Florencio.

The number of scrawny, listless kids from food-poor families, who weighed below normal, were cut by a miniscule 1.4 percent over five years, Florencio says in her new book: "Nutrition in the Philippines: The Past for its Template, Red for its Color." At this rate, "it may take 37 years" before the 1990 prevalence of underweight children—34 out of every 100—is reduced by half."

Slippages in providing critical iron, iodine and vitamin A to ill-fed children and mothers are widening. But self-serving evaluations of current programs paper over the exacerbation of the old problems. We're "not even staying in place (but) lagging behind," Florencio adds.

Adversely affected, yet again, are the most vulnerable: kids below 5 and pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers. A comparison of UN Human Development Report tables, for example, indicates that many of our kids are lighter, shorter (and frailer?) than their Korean, Malaysian and Singaporean counterparts.

The government thus set out to trim "powderpuffs" by 20 percent. But only 14 out of every 100 pre-school kids tipped the scales right, the last survey shows. And obesity has slightly worsened. What trips alarm bells is the surge in anemia—supposed to be cut by a fifth. "In fact, there was a 5 to 8 percent increase in anemia." Over half of every 100 infants (6 months to a year) are afflicted.

More than 40 out of every 100 pregnant and breast-feeding women are anemic. Those are deprivation levels set a decade back. The ill-fed give birth to wizened infants who, in turn, will mother a generation of dwarfed babies, the Asian Development Bank warns. Chronic hunger in infancy also stunts development. "In later years, their remote controls will always be a button or two short," explains a UN nutritionist.

This is crumbling the country's human base. But it doesn't "elicit even a modicum of governmental and public reaction," Florencio marveled. "There was no outburst of fury, media exposé, a brigade of text messages .... What explains the public apathy? The nonchalance of political leaders? The effrontery of government to draw up 'another nutrition plan,' merely to swap for its obsolete recycled blue print?

"Lethargy and fatigue, which malnutrition spawns, are widespread in poorer societies. Victims blend into the woodwork. So, we're blind to Lazarus at the gate. There's also little outcry because the burial shrouds are mostly out of sight—in city slums or farm shacks."

But chronic hunger is not about individual affliction, Florencio argues. "It is an unmistakable indicator of a government's inability to curb inequities," and to provide elbow room for human growth. This blindness enables individuals and institutions to dodge accountability.

The nutrition problem is mutating. And it now "has a larger cast of characters": from development banks to local governments, international agencies and NGOs.

It's simplistic to say we're "in transition": from a country of the ill-fed to a nation of the corpulent, Florencio writes. The complex reality is "a layering of nutritional problems" that differ but interlock.

At the base is a massive—and expanding—stratum of undernutrition afflicting people of most ages. Over it is a large—and swelling—tier of crippling micronutrient lack in the young and old. Just starting to jell is a layer of the plump, overweight within "gated enclaves" and among the better-off sectors.

This changing nutritional profile should reshape policies, budgets and players. "Food and nutrition are not immune to politics and competition for dominance and control," Florencio notes. But critical issues are oftentimes wedged within narrow perspectives, like this administration's life span and that of the previous regime's.. "Government must go beyond rhetoric."

The Local Government Code's devolution of services spurred local nutrition programs. In Cebu City, 20 poorer elementary students get *pan de sal* baked from wheat fortified with iron and Vitamin A. This is a joint project of the Nutrition Center of the Philippines and Rep. Raul del Mar to reduce anemia and boost weight increases.

Such innovations path-blaze for other local governments. LGUs today have historically unprecedented level of revenues but a crippling shortage of human-need programs. Many instead ladle hefty honorariums for themselves.

In Mandaue City, 34 percent of children are underweight and 56 percent of pregnant women have anemia. Yet, the Ombudsman is asking why Mandaue bought 124 street lamps at P223,000 each for the Asean Summit. In next door Naga town, the lamp costs P16,000 each.

"Food is the first need—and right—of every human being," the Hague 1984 World Food Congress declared. Since then, there has been growing acceptance of a rights-based framework.

"There is no closing that door," Florencio writes. "A bleak future awaits a country that does not take good care of its mothers and ... give a kind and generous welcome to the youngest of its young."

* * *

E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com

No impunity

FOREIGN COMMENT

THE UNHAPPY PEOPLE OF DARFUR MADE THE FIRST SIGNIFIcant steps along the road to justice when the International Criminal Court in the Hague was asked to issue arrest warrants against two individuals for crimes against humanity: the Sudanese "Humanitarian Affairs" minister and a militia commander—the planner and executor, it is alleged, of a deliberate strategy of massacres, summary executions and rapes on a massive scale, in which 200,000 people died and two million were forced to flee their homes. If the pair are convicted, they face life imprisonment.

There is, of course, little chance of that happening at present. The court has no powers of arrest and relies for enforcement on governments who have signed up to the Rome treaty which founded the court.

Nonetheless, the application for arrest warrants is a powerful international signal that there can be no impunity for the horrific crimes in Darfur. Now the prosecutors need to trace the trail of guilt higher up the military and political chain of command.

The Independent (London)

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'Losers'

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I FINALLY MET THE CANDIDATES OF THE Kapatiran last Friday at the Quezon Elliptical. I had prepared myself for a fairly serious, or even somber, discussion, expecting a bunch of people who, like Kapatiran's guiding light, Nandy Pacheco, are given to more sedate pleasures and riveted to lofty or grand preoccupations. A complete surprise they turned out to be, and from where I stood, or sat, not an unpleasant one.

They are as resolutely secular as the next fellow, and the night turned out to be, if not altogether raucous, a much spirited one. They love this life well enough and like to live it as best they can, while helping others do the same—which is the part where they soar to lofty and grand heights without trying. In the course of our banter, or merrymaking, I remembered a distinction Russell Baker once made between serious and solemn, classifying quite unexpectedly and with such profound insight Harper's Magazine as serious and Playboy as solemn. I thought to myself: The candidates of Kapatiran are serious, the candidates of Team Unity and the Genuine Opposition are solemn.

Fueled by a good amount of beer, Martin Bautista—a doctor in his mid-40s who attributes his physical fitness to the libation—recalled that it taxed Nandy's formidable powers of persuasion to convince him to run. What clinched the deal was Nandy finally saying, "*T—na, tapang lang 'yan* (Christ, all it takes is heart)." His companions reminded him that while Nandy was prone to saying things like those, he was not prone to saying "*t—na*" or anything remotely resembling a four-letter word. Anyway, Bautista was a conversion waiting to happen.

He never had it so good than in the United States. He was one of the first batches of doctors who went there in the '80s when a good portion of the American black communities was being ravaged by AIDS. And when American doctors were loath to expose themselves to infection by physically touching the afflicted in hospitals. Bautista acquitted himself well—"You go through PGH (Philippine General Hospital), you can go through anything"—and ended up living the kind of life most Filipinos could only (wet)dream about. Come to think of it, he said, he pretty much never had to buy beer, or liquor, in Oklahoma. The thing just poured in from grateful patients or people he had done a favor, or made *pakikisama* to, at one time or another.

What Bautista could not forget, however, was the sight of the *sakada* areas of Negros, which he got to be reminded of each time he went back to the Philippines. He made it a point to visit them, and each time he saw that the plight of the folk there had gotten worse. The birth of sugar had been their starvation, the death of sugar had been their death. The average life span there, Bautista said, was 32. Children died of hunger. You saw how they lived, he said, and the scavengers of Payatas suddenly looked like they lived in Forbes. For some reason, he said, he couldn't get that image out of his mind. He never applied for a green card. He was always sure he'd come home.

I believe there's another word for "some reason." It is "conscience."

Jess Paredes who was *bitin* with the one bottle of wine spread around, found stumping through the country educational, quite apart from rejuvenating, not least because of the warm camaraderie. Jess is the quietest of the three, but one with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

The one experience that agitated him, he said, was an out-of-town sortie where a man asked him how serious he was about the things he promised to do. "We've heard all that before," the guy said, "how are you any different? Why should we believe you? If you win, will you resign your post if we can show you to have broken one of your promises?"

Jess answered in some heat: "If I do not do what I said I'd do, or if I become just another *trapo*, you have my permission to aim a gun at my head in the Senate and blow my brains out!"

I suggested to Jess that Kapatiran had the least problems in credibility. Actions speak louder than words, and the Kapatiran candidates have a track record to speak volumes for them. A couple of months ago, Jess himself just resigned as executive director of the presidential commission monitoring the VFA, in protest over the release of Cpl. Daniel Smith from a Makati jail. A *trapo* is one who forsakes principle for wealth and/or power. The opposite of *trapo* is one who forsakes wealth and/or power for principle. Guess what Jess is.

Adrian Sison had a fairly flourishing career as a lawyer and would have liked nothing better than to sit back and reap his just rewards to the end of his days. But he, too, became a victim of Nandy's powers of persuasion. What made him hark to his new calling was an idea that had been said before again and again but which waylaid him this time with special force. That idea was: All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing. It's a matter of personal responsibility. You do not offer an alternative when you are in a position to do so, do not blame this country for settling for the old banes.

Later Nandy would enthuse and tell me that things seemed to be moving, and he personally felt a miracle was about to happen in this country. Who knows, he said, we may yet work a quiet revolution before these elections are over. Well, the way Kapatiran is rapidly pricking media's and the public's attention, who knows indeed. My mind harked back to a mission someone undertook a couple of millennia ago. The mission seemed far more impossible. That was the ridiculous quest of a carpenter's son and his 12 fishermen *alalays* to change the world. The spectacle they offered sent the important men of the time scoffing and laughing their heads off.

But, lo and behold, those "losers" did change the world.

Vilmanians

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

BISHOP RAMON ARGUELLES' TRIBUTE TO LIPA Mayor Vilma Santos is, as the INQUIRER noted, "very Vilmanian" and it goes to the very core of public service. People are really looking for change, he opined, and they see the former actress as "a very sincere and honest leader, someone who's really out to serve the people. That's why she is respected, not to mention that she was able to achieve so many things."

It's all that and more. I think what the people of Batangas like about her is her sincerity—she doesn't look and act "plastic," unlike many politicians. This early, a columnist has hinted that if she continues the way she is, Vilma could be a candidate for president in 2010. That may be a bit far out yet, but definitely she could establish her own political genre, the local who makes it to the national, and getting more than second looks.

* * *

Opposition senatorial candidate Noynoy Aquino has sought to disqualify as a "nuisance candidate" Theodore "Kuya Ted" Aquino, a close relative who's also running for the Senate. The Comelec gave Ted 10 days to reply and prove he is capable of mounting a national campaign.

But as his backer, Kalayaan College president Jose Abueva, pointed out, Ted filed his candidacy way ahead of Noynoy; in fact, he was the first candidate to file his certificate of candidacy. And he's probably better qualified, being a registered California professional engineer for the past 35 years, with experience in civil engineering, highways and mass transport systems, solid waste management and related fields. Ted, a UP alumnus and president of the UP Alumni Association in America, is supported by the vast network of Filipino organizations abroad, called the Global Filipinos Coalition. It wants a representative in the Senate and Ted has vowed to "vigorously intervene" to protect the rights especially of the "vulnerable migrant workers" and help implement a crisis management plan for global Filipinos.

* * *

At the Comelec hearing, Ted Aquino was grilled by Commissioners Nicodemo Ferrer and Florentino Tuason. Does he have supporters in the Arroyo administration, he was asked. Did he file his candidacy knowing Noynoy was going to run?

Ted said he attended an Aquino family reunion late in 2006, but no one talked about Noynoy running, and he wasn't even there. Asked about his US citizenship, he said he was both a Filipino and American citizen and that he had declared under oath his allegiance to the Philippines and to protect and defend its Constitution when he regained his citizenship. His lawyer also cited a Supreme Court ruling that he had renounced his US citizenship in effect by qualifying as a dual citizen and filing his candidacy. This case will test the meaning of dual citizenship.

* * *

Last March 2, the spouses of ambassadors here held their well-attended annual charity fund-raising, titled "Colours of Asia," at the residence of Belgian Ambassador Gregory Vardakis. It featured a garden buffet dinner, a silent auction, dancing and entertainment. The different embassies each sponsored one or two tables, all for charity. We were invited by the Embassy of South Africa, with Deputy Chief of Mission Eugene Grobler and his wife Jireh as our hosts (Ambassador and Mrs. Pieter Vermuellen were just arriving from home leave that night).

* * *

There, I ran into Italian Ambassador Rubens Fedele and we chatted about the "extrajudicial killings" and UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston. He smiled as he pointed out the contradiction in the term since "judicial killings" have been outlawed with the abolition of the death penalty. Fedele stressed two points: One was that most European envoys don't subscribe to Alston's finding that the military alone was responsible for the killings. "We believe that some of them were caused by leftist elements, some due to personal motives, some political and many others," he stressed, noting that 10 days of investigation was not enough to come up with a conclusive judgment.

But just because the government suspects some killings were done by leftists is no excuse for inaction on them, he opined, adding the "friendly advice" that President Macapagal-Arroyo should welcome foreign assistance in the investigation, as this would show it's not hiding anything. In fact, he said the government could act more favorably on two international instruments: the Convention Against Forced Disappearances (signed in Paris last year but not by RP) and the International Criminal Court (signed by RP but not ratified by the Senate). He recalled that some years back, Italy was in the throes of many such killings, as the Red Brigade and the Black Shirts fought each other. But the government decisively acted and the situation stabilized; he admitted to some resurgence of Red Brigade activities in some areas, but arrests are being made.

* * *

The National Day of the Republic of Estonia, a small but very picturesque country in Central Europe, is observed during the week of the Edsa People Power anniversary at the end of February. Last Feb. 23, we all noted that Estonia's celebration at the Manila Polo Club, hosted by Honorary Consul General Dr. Juan N. Peña and his son, Honorary Consul Fernando Martin O. Peña, drew a much bigger crowd than last year's. Among the guests were former President Fidel Ramos, Speaker Jose de Venecia and Presidential Management Staff chief Cerge Remonde. Some guests speculated that one reason must be that Estonia's National Day didn't coincide with any military adventurism, unlike on Feb. 24 last year. They recalled the enormous tension last year, when military elements attempted a coup which was foiled by the authorities.

* * *

Hildegard, woman power

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

"HAIL, O GREENEST BRANCH…(O VIRIDISSIMA virga…)/ When the time came/ that you blossomed in your branches/ hail, hail was (the word) to you! For the warmth of the sun distilled in you/ a fragrance like balsam./ For in you blossomed the beautiful/ flower that gave fragrance/ to all the spices/ which had been dry/ And they all appeared in all verdure…"

Today is Women's Day and this month is Women's Month. Greetings, dear sisters!

It behooves us to learn from great women who lived many centuries removed from our era, women who made a dent in their milieu through their daring and groundbreaking work. Voices crying in the wilderness, prophets in their time, women of uncommon courage and wisdom.

Hildegard of Bingen was one such woman. And those opening lines are hers.

On March 5, 2007, St. Scholastica's College gave out the first Hildegard Awards for Women in Media and Communication. The awardees were QTV Channel 11 for women-centered programming; Feny de los Angeles Bautista, producer of "Batibot," for her advocacy of child-friendly television; Nora C. Quebral, "mother of development communication in the world," for communication education; and Genoveva "Lola Bebang" Edroza-Matute, for her pioneering work as a feminist scriptwriter during radio's golden age.

These trailblazers in the field of communication each received an Inay-aruga trophy sculptured by Inday Cadapan.

And who is Hildegard?

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), a canonized Catholic saint, was a Benedictine abbess, preacher, writer, musician, mystic, scholar, scientist, environmentalist, healer. She was also a communicator of wisdom and knowledge.

Those of us who were educated at the Benedictine-run St. Scho (which just turned 100) knew her only as one of the great Benedictine saints, but we didn't know much about her life and work. (Now we do and hail her.)

We knew St. Hildegard then as the building up front, the most imposing structure in the campus, done in Beaux Art and Romanesque style, with intricate arches, huge columns and a grand social hall. On the front wall of the building are Saints Hildegard's and Scholastica's images in bas-relief. (And because I opened my mouth, the bas-reliefs recently got a new coat of paint.)

With the rise of the women's movement, Hildegard is back to her future, so to speak. Her life is being celebrated. Her written works and music are being studied.

Hildegard was 42 when she began to have visions, which she recorded as "illuminations." I have the book "Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen" (with commentary by Matthew Fox, author of many books, priest and controversial advocate of creation spirituality). Of Hildegard, Fox had said many times, "If Hildegard had been a man, she would be well-known as one of the greatest artists and intellectuals the world has ever seen."

Fox dedicates the book "to my sister Hildegard, and all her sisters, past, present and to come, in a hope that their wisdom will cease to be repressed, ridiculed, forgotten and otherwise excluded from church, society and culture, so that the earth might be blessed and mutuality might be the law of the land."

In the book, Hildegard is described as an extraordinary woman who lived in the Rhineland valley during most of the 12th century. She was the abbess of a large and prosperous Benedictine abbey. She was a prominent preacher, doctor, scientist, artist, poet and composer. She had written nine books on theology, medicine, science and physiology. Today, she would be considered an eco-feminist.

Wrote Bernard W. Scholz in "The American Benedictine Review": "She castigated a pope for his timidity and an emperor for moral blindness. She taught scholars and preached to clergy and laity as no woman before her had ever done … She claimed that now woman rather than man—obviously Hildegard herself—was to do God's work. It is difficult not to see her visionary experience and activism, as well as her claim for the mission of woman in a male-dominated age, as a gesture of protest, the reaction of an intelligent and energetic woman who chafed under the restraints imposed on women by the culture in which she lived."

For almost 800 years Hildegard was virtually unknown, but in the 1980s she began to emerge, and interest in and awareness of her significance began to grow. Some years ago, I was able to find in a local music store a recording of Hildegard's songs ("Vision") with a booklet of lyrics and on what her music was about. I once heard one of the songs used as background in a stage production.

Of her own music, Hildegard said: "These watery varieties of sounds and silences, terrifying, mysterious, whirling and sometimes gestating and gentle must somehow be felt in the pulse, ebb and flow of the music that sings in me. My new song must float like a feather on the breath of God."

But it is in "Illuminations" that one gets a glimpse of Hildegard's "greening power." (She coined the word *viriditas*.) She was first to view the universe as a cosmic egg. She offered a scintillating insight into the cosmos and its symphonic beauty. I couldn't help thinking, Hildegard was eight centuries ahead of Teilhard de Chardin.

Hildegard sings to us even today, and these lines from her could very well be for her 21st-century sisters:

O life-giving greenness of God's hand,/ with which he has planted an orchard,/ You rise resplendent into the highest heavens,/ like a towering pillar./ You are glorious in God's work…"

She hears God speaking to her. *"I am the breeze that nurtures all things green./ I encourage blossoms to flourish with ripening fruits./ I am the rain coming from the dew/ that causes the grasses to laugh/ with the joy of life."*

* * *

Send feedback to cerespd@info.com.ph

Indefensible in Plaza Miranda

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

PRESIDENT RAMON MAGSAYSAY, WHOSE 50th death anniversary is coming up, famously remarked, "Can we defend it in Plaza Miranda?" But then he was an activist president who was impatient with the idea of telling Juan de la Cruz to ape Juan Tamad—wait for the fruit to fall from the trees (or for economic benefits to trickle down from above).

He was also that old-fashioned kind of populist who leaped over fences, instead of raising them, to keep the common *tao* at arm's length. But then, today, populism is a dirty word among those happily splashing about the shallow pool of our economy. Letting the people eat cake would be too generous. Let them sip from the gutter! How's that for trickle-down?

Might as well take a cue from Orwell and change the noble words on the Cebu Provincial Capitol from "The authority of the government emanates from the people," to "the authority of the government eliminates the people." Because, you know, as Madame Imeldific once said, "Some are smarter than others." And some are too smart to engage in a debate before the vulgar herd, it seems.

Sergio Ortiz-Luis remarked on ANC the other day that his group's offer to sponsor a debate in the Manila Hotel, Kampi's favorite haunt, makes more sense, because a debate in Plaza Miranda will be a security and logistical nightmare. Now he's basically a nice guy, and I'm sure he didn't mean to imply that Manila Mayor Lito Atienza isn't capable of securing a public debate in the heart of his city. Otherwise, Ortiz-Luis' group will owe Manilans an apology along the lines Iloilo City residents are demanding from whoever it was in the opposition who claimed their rally was cancelled because of a bomb threat.

Ortiz-Luis and company should be commended: their offer to host a debate demonstrates a high sense of civic consciousness on the part of businessmen who are generally allergic to politics and politicians—because politicians want to keep milking businessmen as if the latter are cows.

And certainly, Ortiz-Luis and company are entitled to their opinion that it makes more sense to hold the debate in the Manila Hotel. To my mind, if that's as far as their comfort level will take them, they should go ahead and sponsor one—after all, the more debates there are, the better. Ortiz-Luis pointed out that the opposition has already told him they'd send at least three representatives to the Manila Hotel debate, so it's not as if the opposition is frightened to face an audience of businessmen.

The scared-cats are in the administration, which blustered and bluffed, and after its bluff was called, have since been trying to dodge a debate. We should recall that the challenge to a debate was made by Presidential Chief of Staff Joey Salceda, after he got irritated by the opposition's questioning the data the administration likes to trot out to support its claim that—whether Juan de la Cruz feels it or not—things are really super for the economy.

The opposition replied, sure, let's debate it in Plaza Miranda. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita then waffled to buy time; but the problem is, the idea of a Plaza Miranda debate is an attractive one. And the best counter-offer—that of [Ortiz-Luis] and company—unfortunately reminds people of the Achilles heel of the administration: its achievements might have made businessmen happy, but they're only one sector of the broader electorate.

That electorate surely deserves a debate where people like Solita Monsod, who has questioned both the administration's claims and the opposition's counter-claims, can ask hard questions. Both sides have no shortage of skillful debaters who can surely explain their side in a manner the layman can understand.

I, for one, would want to know if the administration senatorial slate believes Secretary Salceda's 7-7-8 growth target is achievable; last Feb. 28, The Economist's Economic Intelligence Unit forecast that "the fiscal deficit will continue to narrow, but the budget will remain in deficit in 2007-2008. Private consumption will continue to be the main driver of the economy, although GDP growth will slow slightly from 5.4 percent in 2006 to 5.3 percent in 2007 and 5.1 percent in 2008. Annual consumer price inflation will average 4 percent in 2007-08. Buoyant remittances from Filipinos working overseas will ensure that the current account remains in surplus."

If The Economist thus concludes growth will slow down, perhaps the administration slate knows something foreign observers don't know? And if so, please do share.

And I'd like to know what the administration and opposition have to say about David Llorito's belief (see http://davidllorito.blogspot.com/ 2007/02/ philippine-mid-term-elections.html) that the administration has been too busy playing "whack-a-mole," that is, stamping out scandals of its own making, to really attend to what it claims it has been doing all along—foregoing politics and focusing on the economy. As Llorito puts it, "We could have achieved some more, probably on a par with our fast-growing neighbors, if only the government had been really attentive to the pulse of the economy."

By way of proving his point, Llorito wrote that as far as the administration claim of an improved economy, "these are real gains, alright, but in truth Malacañang has little to do with it at all. A look at the national income accounts shows the country's growth was largely driven by consumption financed by remittances, the rapid growth of cyberservices and the recovery in the export sector. The dynamics of these growth drivers have nothing to do with Palace occupants."

Surely then, a debate on whether politics can ever be divorced from the economy, and whether claims of economic achievements are more than playing politics, deserves an open, public, debate!

Looking too far

YOUNG BLOOD

Earlie Pasion

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

MEDS IS A MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY STUDENT IN BAGUIO. He wants to be a doctor someday and practice as a volunteer in Africa after graduation.

I asked him why during a couple of conversations we had. His answer was: Africa does not have enough doctors. Africa needs doctors more, because millions are dying there. The people are poorer there…

I would interrupt and point out to him that millions of Filipinos were also poor and dying from lack of doctors. But I would also concede that many parts of Africa were being devastated by diseases and that many people were dying without getting medical attention.

My five days' stay in Johannesburg, South Africa, last December proved to be an eye-opener. Together with over 200 others, 10 of us Filipino youths were able to get a glimpse of South Africa after its struggle against apartheid.

I used to have an image of Africa as the poorest place in the world. And when I say poor, it encompasses everything bad: diseases, death, malnutrition, low technology, poor quality of education, high crime rates, dirty water, lack of food resources, shanties, etc.

"Joburg" proved me wrong. When I went over the pictures I had taken while my friends and I were walking around Metro Manila and when I browsed the Internet and saw pictures of "shanties of Manila," I came to realize that we are poorer than the poorest.

Our bus tour took us to Soweto (Southwest Township) which was established during the time of apartheid. It was meant as a temporary housing for the mine workers, but people permanently occupied the area. Squatters later moved in and overcrowding resulted in uncontrolled crimes and violence.

But today, compared to Metro Manila's slums, Soweto looks far better. The township sits on a vast tract of land. Most houses are real houses, and not the *tagpi-tagping yero at karton* kind which one sees along the railroad tracks in Manila or Makati or on the banks of the black and stagnant Pasig River near Quiapo and Binondo.

During one Sunday service, Bishop Eben Nhiwatiwa challenged us: "What have you come here to see? Have you come here to see Soweto?" He went on to suggest that Soweto might be in our own backyard.

After a moment of reflection, I had to say yes, Soweto was in my backyard and it was even a worse version of it. The only difference was that people in Soweto were blacks while those in my backyard were my fellow Filipinos. I was proud to be Filipino but I began to pity my countrymen. I hated the government for its inability to eradicate poverty and lift our people's standard of living. And I felt challenged to do something about it. But for now, all I can do is tell everyone about my experience.

People like Meds who have a heart for volunteerism and sense of mission are nearly extinct. Most of us are just contented with going about our routines day after day. Some, like Meds, want to go to other places to help their poor, but as I told him, the dollars one sends back home cannot make up for the loss of a Filipino giving care to a fellow Filipino.

Before we look with compassion at other countries' poor, shouldn't we first take care of those who are living in the Soweto in our own backyard? Sometimes we look so far into the distance that we fail to see things in front of us.

Earlie L. Pasion, 20, is national education department head of the United Methodist Youth Fellowship in the Philippines. He attended the Global Young People's Convocation and Legislative Assembly in Johannesburg, South Africa, last December.

'Ano'

Alexander C. Tan

MY MOTHER IS A WOMAN OF FEW WORDS, AND HER favorite word, judging from how frequently she utters it, is "*ano*."It's her all-purpose word for just about anything. Purge it from her vocabulary, and she would probably be rendered speechless.

"*Anuhin mo nga 'yung ano ng ano baka kasi umano yung ano*," she told me one time. Unless you're a mind reader, there's just no way you would know what she wanted. But I have learned to infer what she means from the context (in this case, it's an hour before lunch and there's something cooking on the stove) and her gestures (she makes a knob-turning action and points in the direction of the kitchen), and I find it relatively easy to decode her fill-in-the-blanks messages. In this particular instance, she was saying: "*Hinaan mo nga 'yung apoy ng niluluto kong baka kasi umapaw 'yung sabaw*" (Turn down the flame so that the broth will not boil over).

Being the playful youngest son that I am, I usually feign a confused look even after I have deciphered her cryptic instructions. This frustrates her and sends her into a fit of head-scratching, stuttering and pointing. And then we both have a good laugh over it.

She's a funny lady, my mother. No doubt, I inherited my sense of humor from her. But, like me, she can easily turn serious and sentimental. On Christmas Day, while I was comfortably napping in her rocking chair, she sneaked up from behind and gave me a card. "*Ano, pasensya na, 'yan lang ang ano ni* Mama *mo*," she whispered before quickly slipping away.

I opened the card and read:

Always Be True to Yourself, My Son,
for There Is Greatness Within You

Throughout your life, I hope you will always
pursue sensitivity and kindness
as your chosen way.
Your sense of humor is wonderful;
hold on to it.
Being able to laugh at the world
will see you through many hard times.
Guard against bitterness and sarcasm;
they can destroy you.

Be yourself: the world will benefit
from your talent and humor.
Search for people who love and
appreciate you for who you are
and who encourage you to improve.
Don't be satisfied with less
than all you can be,
for you have greatness within you.

Not her original words, but surely her heartfelt sentiments for me. The message couldn't have been more fitting and touching. I was deeply moved (one blink and a gulp to hold back the tears).

On the left panel of the card she had written: "I love you with the love of the Lord… Just me, Mama." Her own words, in her distinct handwriting.

I went to her and embraced her and held her in my arms for a long time. I didn't need to say anything. For she, the woman who gave birth to me and insists on seeing greatness in me, understood exactly what I wanted to say.

Sure, I can decode Mama's endearing *ano* language. But the truth is, try as I may, I can never ever understand my mother more than she understands me. It's just … *ano*.

Alexander C. Tan, 28, is the creative head of a publishing house in Mandaluyong City.

Coconut Foundation: a way to defraud coco farmers twice

LETTERS

THE SMALL COCONUT FARMERS strongly oppose the plan of President Macapagal-Arroyo to create a Coconut Foundation that will manage the coconut levy funds. The foundation is the brainchild of those pushing for a compromise agreement with Danding Cojuangco. Their call for an out-of-court settlement has always been rejected during the time of Haydee Yorac in the Presidential Commission on Good Government. But they continuously devise ways to trick the farmers to support such an agreement.

The intent of the foundation is to achieve a universal compromise deal that will cover all cases related to the coconut levy—criminal and civil. It is the administration's first concrete step to seal the compromise deal which Bishop Fernando Capalla and the BUPPFaluc (Bishops, Ulama, Priests, Pastors, Farmers and Lumad Conference) have been negotiating with Cojuangco since 2001. It was deplorable when Camilo Sabio, upon assuming the position of PCGG chair, supported the group and vigorously pursued the compromise deal. Now, it is alarming that the President herself has come out in the open and announced such a perverted plan.

Here is an odd case where the government, the party who won the coco levy cases against Cojuangco, is the one seeking for an out-of-court settlement. So outrageous is the situation: the government itself refuses to honor the decisions of the Supreme Court and the Sandiganbayan, which ruled that the coco levies are public funds, held in trust by the government for all the coconut farmers. These decisions ought to remind the President that the coco levy funds were collected from the farmers, for the benefit of the farmers and the coconut industry—not for chosen individuals or groups willing to compromise, and definitely not for Cojuangco.

The coconut farmers are definitely not against the use of the coco levy funds, which should have been done a long time ago. The farmers have been fighting for the recovery of the funds for almost 20 years. But it does not mean that they will succumb to the tricks and antics of the compromise group, especially during an election season.

Before decisions are made, there should be proper consultations with all the stakeholders. The mechanisms for the delivery of programs must be properly established to ensure that the entire coconut industry—especially the genuine small coconut farmers—will truly benefit from the coco levy funds. Sadly, the "foundation" merely reflects an effort to again divide a huge loot taken from the farmers; it is a mere reenactment of the scam. Poor coconut farmers!

—JOEY T. FAUSTINO,
executive director, Coconut
Industry Reform (COIR)
Movement Inc., 84 Masikap Ext.,
Barangay Central,
Diliman, Quezon City

Street vendors back in Baclaran

I HAVE BEEN A RESIDENT OF Baclaran, Parañaque City for more than six years now and I am personally aware of how the issue of relocating street vendors has festered through the years. I wonder what may be the existing policy, if there is, of our local government on street vendors.

Last Christmas season, the local government allowed street vendors to occupy the streets surrounding the Redemptorist Church and the one going to Baclaran LRT station, making it very difficult for us, residents in the area, to get to the LRT station and Roxas Boulevard. After the holidays, we were surprised to see the streets without the vendors and their merchandise. Public utility vehicles and pedestrians could use the streets without having to put up with congested traffic, but this would last just for a month. At present, the street vendors are back, occupying the streets, causing appalling traffic gridlocks not to mention the rise in the incidence of street crimes in the area.

The 10-minute ride from the LRT station going to Airport Road has become a one-hour ordeal. If only our beloved mayor would pass through these streets—especially going to Tambo, Parañaque from the Baclaran LRT station, he would know how hard it is to be trapped in those streets with undisciplined vendors.

—JANET O. MESINA,
11 Aragon St.,
Baclaran, Parañaque City

Is it now a crime to celebrate Mass?

FIRST, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE this opportunity to commend the INQUIRER for its balanced and truthful news reports. The people always deserve to know the truth.

Second, I would like to share with the public an experience I went through in front of the Tagaytay Regional Trial Court last Ash Wednesday.

I could not believe my eyes when I saw a ranking official of the Tagaytay police warning pastors and nuns against celebrating the Mass that was requested by the families of the "Tagaytay 5"—Michael Masayes, Enrico Ybañez, Riel Custodio, Axel Pinpin, Aries Sarmiento—and their friends that day. But even before they could set up the altar, the police already took some of their streamers and warned them not to go on with what they were planning to do. I even heard the police official tell the group, "*Pag itinuloy niyo 'yan ay magkakagulo dito* (If you push through with the Mass, there will be trouble here)!"

When was it a crime to celebrate Mass on Ash Wednesday? When was a religious rite forbidden in a democratic country? At that moment, I was scared. I just couldn't believe that the police no longer respect pastors and nuns. The police official was not even in his official uniform.

We no longer proceeded to say Mass in front of the RTC; but one of the pastors insisted on putting the symbolic ash on the Tagaytay 5. Some of the policemen tried to block him from getting near the Tagaytay 5, but he was determined and was able to put ash on the foreheads of the Tagaytay 5.

I was in tears to see how cruel the system has become these days. I couldn't believe that servants of the Lord would be prevented from performing their religious tasks. Jesus Christ needed no pulpit or a massive temple to preach and teach. Is it now a crime to say Mass on Ash Wednesday?

Having suffered so much already, the Tagaytay 5, as well as their loved ones and friends, didn't deserve to be treated that way. I pray that justice will soon make its way like a spring water to the ocean of freedom!

—ALPHA JANE N. BUTACA,
tubao3@lycos.com

Meralco for lower electricity rates

THIS REFERS TO CENON MAKALINAO'S letter titled "Electricity should be part of senatorial debate." (INQUIRER, 3/2/07) Makalinao dealt on a number of issues which we would like to clarify.

In gist, Makalinao is saying that Meralco can lower its rates if it undertakes prudent procurement of power supply, terminates sweetheart deals with generation companies owned by Meralco management and trims its system loss. He also touches on the subject of customer choice program.

On the procurement of power supply and the so-called sweetheart deals, Meralco is not protecting, and will never be in a position to protect, the interest of independent power producers (IPPs). Although some of the IPPs are affiliates of Meralco, it never benefited and does not stand to gain from its IPP purchases. It may be recalled that Meralco entered into an agreement with these IPPs upon the government's prodding, to complement Napocor's insufficient power supply in the 1990s, which shortage resulted in long, crippling blackouts. We believe that Meralco did its part in helping the country extricate itself from those long blackouts, and as a consequence uplift the national economy.

Meralco's purchases from various power generators are based on which supply mix will yield the lowest cost to the consumers and, of course, on the existing contracts with them.' This is one of our paramount concerns.

On system loss, Meralco is waging a very aggressive campaign against power pilferage and illegal connections. In fact, it has signed several memoranda of agreement with local government units and dedicated a significant number of its workforce—which means that it must allocate a substantial amount of resources—for this purpose.

The system loss charge is provided for by law (RA 7832). The law, however, only allows distribution utilities to recover from the customers up to 9.5 percent of system losses. Any amount beyond must be shouldered by the distribution utilities. In 2006 alone, Meralco shouldered P1.9 billion in system loss.

Meralco's move to expand the scope of the customer choice program to those that meet a demand of at least 750 kilowatts is a step toward achieving a positive environment for the electric industry. By giving customers the freedom to choose between Meralco's blended supply (power sourced from both Napocor and the IPPs) and power that is purely obtained from Napocor, Meralco has actually initiated the groundwork for the implementation of open access. This, we believe, will eventually help bring down electricity rates.

However, the process of laying the foundations for a wider coverage of competition has to be taken one step at a time, following a schedule set by the Electric Power Industry Act (Epira). Meralco has in fact been studying its options under Epira on how to lower electricity costs in response to the clamor by industries for lower electricity rates.

—ELPI O. CUNA JR.,
vice president and head,
Corporate Communication,
Meralco, Pasig City

Proofs showing Erap was Jose Velarde

FORMER PRESIDENT JOSEPH Estrada stated in a letter (INQUIRER, 2/27/07) that "the bank records are there for all to see that Jose Velarde is Jaime Dichaves and not Joseph Estrada." On the contrary, the bank records clearly show he was Jose Velarde. In fact, he admitted before the Sandiganbayan that he signed as Jose Velarde in the Investment Management Agreement and related documents.

Estrada made so much fuss over the non-presentation of the second envelope at the Sandiganbayan trial. This was due to a very simple reason: its contents were mere photocopies and, thus, not admissible in court. But the prosecution did present to the court original copies of the bank's statements of account (copies of which were contained in the second envelope).

Also, the former bank officials presented by the defense were unable to testify that the account belonged to Dichaves. In fact, one of them previously executed an affidavit that he didn't know who owned the account.

The reason Estrada's Senate allies blocked the opening of the second envelope was: it would have revealed the shocking truth that more than P3 billion was deposited in that account. The disclosure that he owned such a huge and unexplainable amount of money could prove fatal to his presidency.

The documents presented by Clarissa Ocampo and Manuel Curato at the impeachment trial clearly proved that Estrada was Jose Velarde. Ocampo testified she was just a foot away when she saw Estrada affix the signature "Jose Velarde" on the bank documents. The evidence presented by the prosecution in the Sandiganbayan also proved that Ms Ortaliza, Estrada's trusted secretary, made many of the deposits to the account, in the staggering amount of more than P800 million. Further, JV Ejercito, one of Estrada's sons, remitted about P182 million to the account. If indeed, the account belonged to Dichaves, Estrada would have given a plausible explanation why his son donated about P182 million to Dichaves: but he has given no such explanation, to date.

Ocampo testified before the Senate on Dec. 22, 2000. It was only after two years that Estrada gave the lame excuse that he signed merely as guarantor. If so, he could have easily told the public about it the very next day after Ocampo testified.

Finally, there is the check for P142 million from the Jose Velarde account. This was used to purchase the "Boracay Mansion." During the ocular inspection of the mansion, a number of documents—including a carpet with an ownership tag of "Pres. J. Estrada," school correspondence relating to the former President's child with Laarni Enriquez, locator slips approved by Enriquez, food stocks and menus—were found, proving that the former President was its owner, hence, was Jose Velarde.

Indeed, the absence of any explanation regarding the mansion during Estrada's testimony was very revealing. His silence can be considered as an admission.

—ARNO V. SANIDAD,
ANTHONY B. PERALTA,
JOHN L. BALISNOMO,
CHRISTIAN S. LIM

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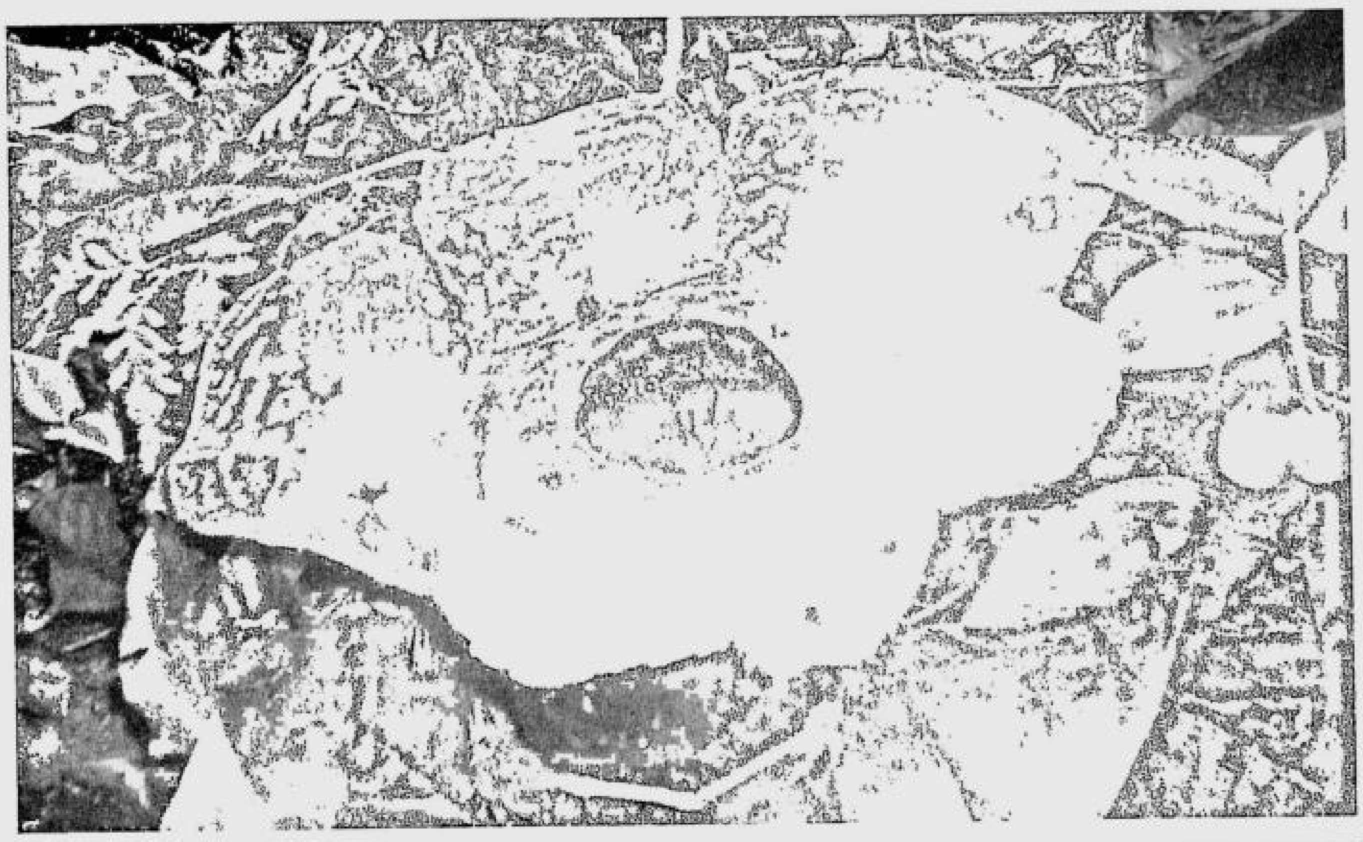
Rare flower reappears in Banahaw

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Lucena City



RAFFLESIA, considered the world's biggest flower, is spotted in Mt. Banahaw.
PHOTO BY TANGGOL KALIKASAN

THREE YEARS AFTER MT. Banahaw was closed to trekkers and devotees, wildlife species began to show life again, including the appearance of "rafflesia," considered the world's biggest flower.

Jay Lim, program officer of Tanggol Kalikasan (TK), an environmental law center in Lucena, said they spotted the rafflesia late last year during an assessment hike of the mountain near Cristalino Falls where pilgrims used to put up their tents every Holy Week.

"Having been familiar with wildlife species, seeing rafflesia again after it disappeared for so long was an awesome sight," Lim said.

One of their companions took photos of the flower that he described as not yet in full bloom.

Citing records of known Mt. Banahaw species, rafflesia has long been a part of the mystical mountain's rich forest wildlife.

"But it slowly disappeared and became almost extinct after throngs of religious pilgrims and picnickers climbed the mountain in droves, especially during Holy Week, leaving behind widespread destruction," Lim recalled.

Aside from Mt. Banahaw, rafflesia, which could reach up to almost a meter in diameter and weigh up to 11 kilograms when in full bloom, can also be found in Mt. Makiling in Batangas-Laguna, Mt. Isarog in Bicol and Mt. Apo in Mindanao.

It can also be found in southeastern Asia, the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, Sumatra, Kalimantan and West Malaysia.

Rafflesia is considered a parasitic flowering plant with a distinctive rotten smell.

Discovered in an Indonesian forest by a native guide working for an expedition in 1888, it was named after Thomas Stamford Raffles, the leader of the group.

Lim said there were also reported sightings of mountain deer, exotic wild berries, wild birds and beautiful rare butterflies in different spots of Mt. Banahaw.

Clean water had also returned gushing from numerous mountain falls.

"There are no more recognizable mountain trails due to the return of thick vegetation. It is again safe to drink the fresh water from flowing river," he noted.

Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala, a noted environmentalist, has been introducing alternative livelihood projects for the hundreds of farmers who depend on slash-and-burn (kaingin) farming practice in the mountain.

In 2004, the Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) sealed off with barbed wire several trails leading to the bosom of Banahaw to start a five-year rehabilitation program that aimed to resurrect the mountain's natural resources.

The mountain suffered so much degradation not only from "kaingin" farming but also from the irresponsible practices of mountain climbers, modern pilgrims and urban nature trippers.

They left behind styrofor boxes, empty water bottles and cans at almost every spot of the mountain.

"Mt. Banahaw has long been being subjected to tremendous environmental pressure from religious pilgrims. Nothing is more divine than to let the environment in its pristine natural condition without human intrusion," said environment lawyer Sheila de Leon, TK-Southern Tagalog executive director.

The mountain forms part of the Mt. Banahaw-San Cristobal National Park, declared as a protected area in June 2003.

The park covers Sariaya, Candelaria, Tayabas, Lucban and Dolores towns all in Quezon, and Rizal, Nagcarlan, Liliw, Majayjay and San Pablo City in Laguna.

> Rafflesia could reach up to almost a meter in diameter and weigh up to 11 kilograms when in full bloom

Humor in 'lambanog' diplomacy'

FOR NEOPHYTE Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala, the potent indigenous coconut-based liquor popularly called the "*lambanog*" is an effective tool in diplomacy, especially if marked with down-to-earth wit and humor inherent among the Filipino drinking class.

"Once the recipient of the bottle … reads every word in the label, any barrier immediately disappears and what follows is camaraderie," Alcala says as he shows a green 750-ml bottle of his brand, "Alcala Vodka."

Atop the name is a caricature of three drinking buddies. Beneath it are the words: "Lakas ng Alkohol; Swabeng Lasing." (Alcohol Power: Smooth Drunkenness.)

With more humor, the label describes the liquor as "Finaedad, Hinalo, Vinotella Por La Tagayña, Distilleria Inc., San Miguel St., Brgy. Tomador, Dimahulasan City."

The bottle also bears an expiry date: "Mamaya Lang." (Later.)

The *lambanog* comes from the sweet and frothy sap of coconut flower called "*tuba*." It is cooked through natural fermentation and distillation.

According to Alcala, what usually floors the recipient of the bottle is his classic advice to drinkers: "Sampung Utos ng Mag-iinom," (Ten Commandments of Drinkers) printed at the back label:

1. *Huwag makulit [habang umiinom]*. (1. Don't be an annoyance [while drinking]).
2. *Huwag matakaw [sa pulutan]*.(Don't be greedy [with finger foods]).
3. *Huwag patagalin ang baso [may iinom pang iba]*. (Don't hold the glass too long [so others may drink].
4. *Huwag uminom nang uminom [bumili ka naman paminsan-minsan]* (Don't drink and drink [buy once in a while]).
5. *Uminom ng diretso sa tiyan [huwag sa ulo]*. (Drink straight to the belly [not the head]).
6. *Magpaalam kung uuwi na [huwag 'yung bigla na lamang mawawala]*. (Tell people when you're leaving [not when they noticed you've disappeared]).
7. *Magtira ng panlakad [kahit hinlalaki sa paa]* (Leave something to walk with [even if it's just the big toe]).
8. *Huwag matulog [habang umiinom]*. (Don't sleep [while drinking.])
9. *Siguraduhing sa bahay ang uwi [kung lasing]*. (Make sure you go home [when drunk.])
10. *Huwag manakit ng asawa [kahit sinasabing "P#%$*@MO KA! Lasing ka na naman!")]* (Don't harm your spouse [even when she's saying "P#%$*@MO KA! You're drunk again!])

Alcala, 52, who was born and raised in the company of pier workers near their ancestral home in Barangay Cotta on the outskirts of the city, said he brewed the drinker's commandments from experiences since his teenage years.

"Some of them were passed on to several generations of drinkers. I recomposed some of them and added some punch lines to the others to keep abreast with the changing trend among drinkers," he said.

"My drinking memoir is rich with humorous anecdotes which I use in spicing up the label of the bottle with wholesome one-liners," Alcala said.

"It is best appreciated in Filipino. Once translated in another language, the punch will no longer be there," he said. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr.*

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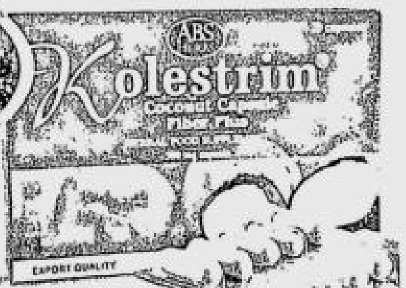

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Satur asks Army: Are calendars illegal?

DAVAO CITY—BAYAN MUNA Rep. Satur Ocampo on Tuesday said the military's confiscation of Bayan Muna materials during a clash between soldiers and communist rebels here last week did not prove anything.

Earlier, the military said the confiscation of Bayan Muna campaign materials from the site of the encounter in Barangay Eden in Toril District has proven that there was a link between the militant group and the New People's Army (NPA).

Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane and Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon on Saturday presented the seized materials, which included posters of incumbent party-list representatives Ocampo, Teodoro Casino and Joel Virador, before reporters here.

"Although I am not in the position of pointing accusing fingers at the parties concerned, this election paraphernalia speak for themselves," Ebdane said.

"They claimed it's in the possession of the NPA, so what?" Ocampo said when contacted by phone.

"It doesn't prove anything," Ocampo added.

Ocampo said the materials in question were not campaign posters but calendars.

"What Esperon and Secretary Ebdane showed was a calendar of Bayan Muna," he said.

He said the calendars showed pictures of him and the two other congressmen leaving the premises of the House of Representatives for the first time after they were charged with rebellion.

"That has been given away and I don't see any point of questioning how it got there. There is nothing illegal in it," Ocampo said.

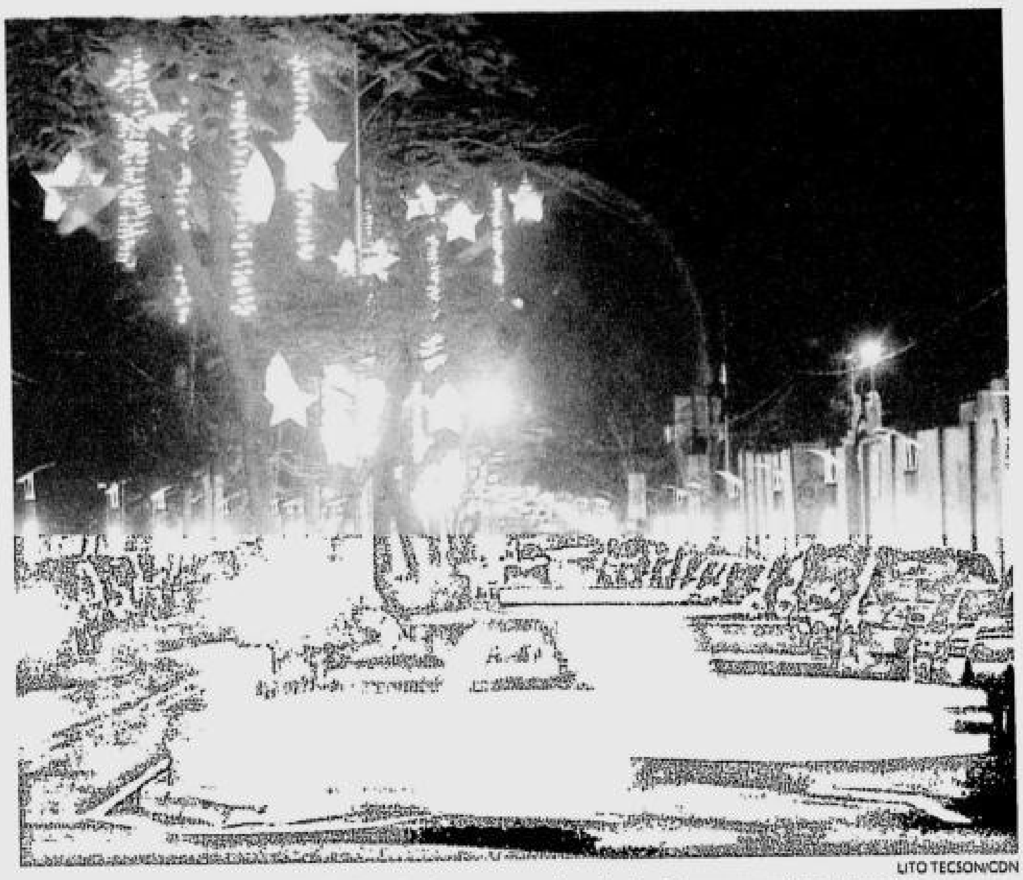
He said it was likely that "pro-people" individuals got hold of the calendars and they eventually reached the hands of the NPA rebels.

He said the military merely capitalized on the discovery of the materials but it does not have any legal ground to question it. *Dennis Jay Santos, Inquirer Mindanao*

₱220,000 per lamppost fiasco dims Cebu's Asean summit job

By Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN in the Visayas has ordered the Department of Public Works and Highways to stop the payment for P120 million worth of decorative street lamps installed in three Metro Cebu cities in December for the Association of Southeast Asian summit amid allegations that they were overpriced.


LITO TECSON/CDN

JUAN Luna Avenue in Cebu City is lit up during preparations for the Asean summit last January.

LAMPPOST ARITHMETIC

P12,000—actual cost of each lamppost
P95,000—cost per lamppost in Cebu
P220,000—cost per lamppost in Mandaue

Ombudsman Visayas director Virginia Palanca Santiago ordered DPWH Central Visayas regional director Roberto Lala and assistant regional director Marlina Alviso to stop the payment to the two contractors—Fabmik Construction and Equipment Corp. and Gampik Construction.

Santiago issued the order yesterday after last Monday's clarificatory hearing, which showed that each lamppost, which cost P95,000, actually cost only about least P12,000.

The suspicion of irregularity was further boosted when Alviso admitted in last Monday's hearing that the ones installed in Mandaue City cost several times more, about P224,000 each.

Promise

Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan yesterday promised to look into the alleged overpriced purchase of 1,800 decorative lampposts that were installed by the DPWH along the ceremonial routes in Cebu, Mandaue and Lapulapu cities for the 12th Asean summit held in January.

Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña and Mandaue City Mayor Thadeo Ouano have both denied involvement in the alleged anomaly.

The Ombudsman investigation was based on the complaint of Mandaue-based businessman Crisologo Saavedra, who said he was shocked when he learned that each lamppost cost P95,000 and was horrified when he found out that in Mandaue, it cost over P200,000.

"I thought all along that the cost is just P95,000 each. So I even asked Alviso twice if he got the figure right," Saavedra said.

He had inquired from the supplier of the lampposts delivered in Mandaue and he was told that it only cost P11,000 each, or P31,000 each, including transportation, installation and other expenses. This meant that the acquisition cost for the lampposts in Mandaue was overpriced by at least 2,000 percent, he added.

Embarrassment

Alviso claimed in last Monday's Ombudsman hearing that the DPWH had nothing to do with the costing as it was the Mandaue City government that prepared the program of work and cost estimate for the project.

Alviso also revealed that DPWH has only so far paid 15 percent of the P120 million cost of the street lighting project.

Osmeña said he was extremely embarrassed because the anomaly has besmirched the name of the mayors of the three Metro Cebu cities. He urged Mayors Thadeo Ouano of Mandaue and Arturo Radaza of Lapulapu to explain their side on the alleged overpricing of the lampposts.

> '...the bidding was done in Manila and the money came from the national government...'

"I am so embarrassed because I'm a mayor. No wonder people think that I'm so corrupt also because some mayors are like that. I think people will forgive you if you make an honest mistake but increasing the price from P20,000 to P200,000 that's not a mistake, that's a crime," he told reporters.

Ouano, meanwhile, vowed that if found that there was an anomaly, he would order all the decorative lampposts in his city uprooted as he would not want any "monument of corruption" in Mandaue.

Ouano admitted the city prepared the program of works and estimates, but the cost estimate was only pegged between P50,000 to P90,000. If the amount was too high, he said, DPWH has the discretion not to follow it.

He said the city of Mandaue has nothing to do with the project. He said the bidding was done in Manila and the money came from the national government.

The government had claimed that Cebu's hosting of the Asean summit was a success.

Statue of pissing Igorot removed amid blog protests

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer N. Luzon

THE CONTROVERSIAL statue that generated heat among Cordillerans abroad. The protesters claimed victory in their fight against misrepresentation of tribal people.
INQUIRER PHOTO

BAGUIO CITY—OWNERS of a restaurant here have removed a statue of a urinating Igorot man, a week after Cordillerans based abroad learned of and protested the statue's existence.

Acting Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. asked the restaurant owners to remove the statue of the Igorot that stood unnoticed for years behind a wall where the sign "Bawal Umihi Dito" was posted. Also removed was the statue of a security guard pointing at the statue.

Bautista said he talked to the restaurant owners because he did not want the online campaign to become a full blown scandal for the city right after staging this year's Baguio Flower Festival. The owners quickly obliged, the mayor said.

Bloggers identified with the Bibak network, a group of Cordillerans, cheered their success and vowed to pursue more online crusades, including against a public TV series that allegedly misrepresents Igorot artifacts and culture.

"For members of minority groups like us who are often inaccurately written about by the mainstream press, cyberspace can be our best avenue for advocacy work," wrote a female blogger who identifies herself as Bugan (www.splasher.halukay.com).

"What I just did not expect is that I'd witness its immense power in just a matter of days. Simply amazing. Time to fiesta! Pun intended," she said.

The blogger, who uses the pseudonym Bill Billig (www.igorotblogger.blogspot.com), said the restaurant's decision to surrender to the bloggers' demands was clearly "an easy victory" for online Igorots.

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Palace: Change of uniforms but no pullout of Metro troops

From page A1

Aguinaldo to order its men to use GOA (general office attire) instead of camouflage uniforms.

"Soldiers clad in camouflage uniforms and wielding long arms are an unwelcome sight," he said. "They can wear light green attire or plain khaki. That will not invite unnecessary attention from the public," he said.

Ermita said the Armed Forces general headquarters would be "monitoring" these costume "refinements."

Not economic issue

Predictably, President Macapagal-Arroyo kept a tight lip on the matter.

"I will leave that to the AFP to respond to. That's not an economic issue," the President said after a roundtable discussion on global warming at the Palace.

Like it or not, the teams of AFP officers and enlisted personnel will stay indefinitely in Metro Manila's poorest barangays, according to the spokesperson of the Department of National Defense.

"It's going to be a continuing program," Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina said, adding that the soldiers would be rotated and replaced in the process.

Carolina echoed earlier AFP statements that the "civil military operations" being conducted by the soldiers were part of their training before deployment to assignments, including peacekeeping missions.

He said the military was actually receiving resolutions from various barangays expressing appreciation for the military presence and efforts in their respective areas.

Undesirables gone

"The people said they were pleased that undesirable elements, including drug addicts, have gone," he told reporters.

Carolina said the communities were glad that the youth in their areas were being organized to do such chores as cleaning canals.

"What we're talking about here is organizing people to do some productive work," he said.

Carolina said the training program for the soldiers had been implemented since last year but some militant groups were now protesting because they thought the activity was election-related.

"It has nothing to do with the elections," he said.

Carolina said some groups suspected the AFP of engaging in electioneering because the soldiers were doing "social surveys" in the barangays.

He said these surveys were being undertaken because the AFP wanted to know the barangays' problems and priorities before extending government assistance.

'Human being-centered'

This is all part of the "paradigm shift" that the DND is undertaking in going about its work, including examining the security problem, Carolina said.

The territory-centered policy is "human being-centered," he said.

He added that Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane had directed AFP officials to "make defense work for development."

The military also welcomed the announcement of the Commission on Human Rights that it would investigate the deployment of soldiers in Metro Manila.

AFP information chief Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said the investigation would help show the public that the military was not violating human rights, as purportedly shown by the barangay residents' approval of the soldiers' presence.

Bacarro said Maj. Gen. Ben Dolorfino, chief of the AFP National Capital Region Command, was looking into allegations that soldiers in the barangays were engaged in electioneering and would submit a report to AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon today.

"[The soldiers] will not be pulled out … It will be a continuing process. Probably they will leave the area only when they vote [on May 14]," Bacarro said.

Challenge to Comelec

Rep. Risa Hontiveros of the Akbayan party-list group challenged the Comelec to act expeditiously on the matter.

"[The Comelec] should recognize the urgency [of the situation], Baraquel told reporters, adding that the poll body should "make up for its shortcomings, if not mistakes," in the 2004 elections.

"It should stop the ongoing harassment," she said.

The lawmaker accompanied Akbayan member Marieta Barandino to the Comelec main office in Manila to file a letter-complaint alleging that soldiers had been harassing residents of Barangay 175 in Camarin, Caloocan City.

Part of training?

Hontiveros said the Comelec, being a constitutional body "morally considered higher than the AFP," should call on the defense and military leadership to halt the "anomalous civil military operations" and pull out soldiers deployed in the areas where most members of party-list groups lived.

She said the AFP should be more prudent in declaring that its soldiers were merely in an immersion program as part of their training for deployment in humanitarian missions abroad.

Hontiveros said it was not right for Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. to say that the poll body could not intervene in purely military operations.

She said it was clear that right in the country's capital, the military was campaigning against militant party-list groups running in the May 14 elections.

But Ermita echoed the AFP line that the soldiers were only undergoing training before being deployed to missions abroad.

Asked about the election case lodged by party-list groups at the Comelec against the troop deployment, Ermita said: "Let's see how these things will prosper."

Coordinated with CHR

The Commission on Human Rights said the deployment of soldiers in Metro Manila had been coordinated with the CHR and should not instantly be condemned.

Nevertheless, Wilhelm Soriano, CHR commissioner for the National Capital Region, fielded on Monday three teams composed of five special investigators to monitor the soldiers' activities.

"The mere presence of military troops in Metro Manila does not violate human rights; neither does it deserve to be labeled as urban militarization," Soriano told the INQUIRER over the phone yesterday. *With reports from Nikko Dizon, Jocelyn R. Uy and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

Ombudsman sitting on 6 graft cases vs gov't printing chief

From page A1

ment Procurement Act, respectively.

Evardone is now on leave from the top post of the NPO, the agency that prints government forms and now the sole printer of ballots, election returns (ERs) and certificates of canvass (COCs), and which is attached to the Office of the President. He is the elder brother of Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone, the media director of the administration's Team Unity senatorial slate.

The cases were filed by Eastland Printink Inc., Ernest Printing Corp. and BestForms Inc.—all private printing companies.

Evardone denied the accusations in an interview with the INQUIRER middle of last year.

He denied involvement in NPO irregularities, which, his critics said, also included negotiated contracts for print jobs worth millions of pesos, "ghost" deliveries and overpricing of printing supplies.

He said that he was clean, and that a Born-Again Christian like himself would never resort to graft and corruption.

He admitted that the NPO had fallen into what he called "a quicksand of corruption and mismanagement," but said his predecessors and some office old-timers were to blame for its current state.

Co-respondents

Evardone started work at the NPO in September 2005 as assistant director. He assumed the top post in February last year.

Among those named as his co-respondents in the graft cases was Marietta de Guzman, who chairs the NPO's Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), and whom Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye had just named officer in charge of the NPO.

Also named as co-respondents were several other BAC officials, as well as top executives of the printing firms Advance Computer Forms, Holy Family Printing Corp., Makati Image Metrocolor, JI Printers and Willprint, who allegedly connived with the NPO officials in the rigging of an April 2006 bidding of Bureau of Customs forms worth more than P90 million.

The complainants called the Customs bidding the "centerpiece" of the multiple graft cases facing Evardone.

They expressed confidence that "after due hearings on the merit" of the criminal cases, a decision would be rendered against Evardone et al. and the corresponding information would be filed at the Sandiganbayan or any other court.

The complainants also filed administrative cases against the same respondents before the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission (PAGC), and asked that the latter be found liable for grave misconduct, dishonesty and gross neglect of duty.

They urged the PAGC to impose upon the respondents the "supreme penalty of removal or dismissal from the service for cause with forfeiture of all retirement benefits and perpetual disqualification to hold public office."

The PAGC has found merit in the complaints filed by Bestforms and Eastland, and recommended Evardone's dismissal for graft and violation of procurement laws.

The Office of the President received the PAGC recommendations on the two cases on Jan. 30 and Feb. 6, but no action has been done.

Sword of Damocles

Leaders of the Genuine Opposition expressed worry over Malacañang's inaction, as well as fears that massive cheating would occur in the May 14 elections.

"We're concerned and deeply worried about the inaction of [President] Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the recommendation of the PAGC to dismiss Evardone," said ex-Sen. Ernesto Maceda, a member of the "executive committee" of the United Opposition, one of the parties in GO.

Because of the threat of dismissal, Evardone can easily be coerced to commit "illegal and immoral" acts such as overprinting election paraphernalia to ensure the victory of administration candidates, according to Maceda.

"So you have an incumbent NPO director with a sword of Damocles hanging over his head. He can easily be threatened by the administration if he does not cooperate in overprinting … How can he refuse any illegal or immoral demands to overprint election forms and ballots?" Maceda said.

He said that in the 2004 presidential election between Ms Arroyo and the late Fernando Poe Jr., "most of the cheating" was done with the use of excess ERs and COCs.

"So that explains why there has been no action on the graft charges against Evardone," said Makati Mayor and UNO president Jejomar Binay.

GO campaign spokesperson Adel Tamano said that in the first place, it was "highly improper" for Evardone to head a crucial agency like the NPO when his governor-brother was an elective official.

"There may be legitimate concerns that election materials produced by the NPO will be used to benefit his brother," said Tamano.

'No sacred cows'

In an interview after her roundtable forum in Malacañang, the President declined to answer a question on the INQUIRER report about Malacañang's inaction on the PAGC recommendations for Evardone's dismissal.

Bunye will "handle that" because the NPO is under his supervision, Ms Arroyo said.

According to Bunye, Malacañang is "aware" of the PAGC recommendations.

"There are no sacred cows in the fight against graft and corruption, and should the evidence warrant, the recommendations will be given due course," he said.

Asked how soon Malacañang would act on the PACG recommendations, Bunye said: "In view of the seriousness of the issue, I think early action is called for." But he did not give a definite date.

Bunye said Evardone ceased to have control over the NPO anyway since he (Bunye) approved his request for a leave of absence, on grounds of *delicadeza*, effective March 1 when his governor-brother was appointed to Team Unity.

It was Bunye who named De Guzman officer in charge of the NPO until May 15, or a day after the senatorial and local elections.

"Insinuations and allegations that the agency will be utilized for poll rigging are malicious and baseless," Bunye said.

He added: "The NPO will be under the strict supervision of the Commission on Elections, and all duly accredited political parties are entitled to send authorized observers to monitor NPO operations, insofar as they relate to the election process, every step of the way."

'Justified' action

Bunye lamented that the PAGC recommendations had been reported in the media despite the commission's policy that such matters would be confidential until the final decision of the Office of the President had been made.

"But as far as the case of Director Evardone [is concerned], you can rest assured that we have taken appropriate steps within our powers to insulate the office from possible charge or allegation of irregularity," Bunye told reporters at a press conference.

"We are prepared to defend our action, and I believe that the action we have taken is justified and proper," he said.

Bunye said it would be unfair to remove Governor Evardone from his post at Team Unity because of his brother's graft case.

"I think the relationship [between the two] is a matter of record, but the governor was designated because of his background [as a] former media practitioner. Team Unity thought it could benefit from the experience of Governor Evardone, but again these are two different cases," Bunye said.

Big office

On the other hand, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the PAGC recommendations had not reached his table.

"My office is quite big; the legal [department] is on the other side [of the Palace]…" he said, adding that he had been told the papers were at the Mabini Hall.

Ermita said Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite failed to forward the papers because Gaite's father had died and he had yet to return to work.

Ermita also said the recommendations would be subject to review.

"Of course, if a very serious [issue] is concerned, there should be due diligence on the part of our review officers. [This is] precisely why the Office of the President is the final arbiter … We want to make sure [its] action will give due course [to any issue] and following proper procedures," he said.

'He knows a lot'

In Davao City, GO senatorial candidates were quick to see election fraud in the works.

Aquilino Pimentel III said Evardone should be sacked altogether.

"Either the higher-ups don't believe the findings against him or he still has a very important task to do," Pimentel told the INQUIRER. "Or maybe he knows a lot, so it would be dangerous to antagonize him."

Pimentel arrived in Davao City yesterday with former Sen. Loren Legarda to get a head start on GO's first campaign sortie in Mindanao.

In a text message to the INQUIRER, reelectionist Sen. Panfilo Lacson said Malacañang's inaction showed that the administration's "cheating machinery" was in place.

He said Evardone's dismissal might disrupt the purported plan for electoral fraud.

Lacson called on the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and civil society organizations to be vigilant in protecting the people's votes in May.

Asked if Evardone should be sacked, Lacson said: "Exactly. It is simply called the rule of law. But [with] the propensity of this administration to disregard the same, not much is to be expected toward that direction."

To brother's defense

But Governor Evardone defended his brother, saying that tampering with election forms at the NPO would be next to impossible.

"Opposition watchers and representatives are embedded in the NPO, making it Big Brother's house," he said, referring to the TV reality show where participants are billeted in one house fitted with cameras at strategic points for close observation.

"The agency is a hotbed of unionism, making it impossible to pull off a ballot printing anomaly right under the noses of labor militants," he said. *With reports from Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Norman Bordadora*

SC orders oil firms to leave Pandacan

From page A1

sideration so there should be "no cause of delay" for the move-out.

"We will notify the oil companies (about the decision). The oil depot poses a clear and present danger. It's hazardous to the residents," he said.

Surrounded by homes and commercial establishments, the 30-hectare depot is one of the places that are immediately placed under tight watch when the police raise the security alert.

Exploring remedies

The three oil firms said they were exploring legal remedies, including a motion for reconsideration, to prevent eviction from the depot.

Nothing can legally hinder Atienza from implementing Ordinance No. 8027, which reclassified portions of Pandacan and Sta. Ana from industrial to commercial zones, according to the tribunal.

The ordinance directed Caltex, Petron and Pilipinas Shell to stop their operations in Pandancan within six months from its effectivity.

Understanding

The ordinance was passed in 2001 but was not implemented because Atienza and the Department of Energy subsequently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Caltex, Petron. and Shell that allowed the three firms to scale down operations and install safety measures.

The high court said the ordinance was necessary to remove the risk of the oil depot being attacked by terrorists and harming Manila's residents.

"Ordinance No. 8027 was enacted right after the Philippines, along with the rest of the world, witnessed the horror of the Sept. 11, 2001 attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City," the high court said in a decision written by Justice Renato Corona.

Catastrophic devastation

The tribunal said the objective of the ordinance was "to protect the residents of Manila from the catastrophic devastation that will surely occur in case of a terrorist attack on the Pandacan Terminals. No reason exists why such a protective measure should be delayed."

It's Atienza's duty as mayor to enforce the ordinance as long as it has not been repealed by the courts, the tribunal said.

"He has no other choice. It is his ministerial duty to do so," the court said.

It was the Social Justice Society (SJS), which describes itself as a political party registered with the Commission on Elections, that raised the issue of the ordinance's implementation to the Supreme Court.

SJS asked the court whether the MOU with the oil companies and the subsequent resolutions that ratified it could repeal Ordinance No. 8027.

LPG terminals removed

Under the MOU, the oil companies would decommission 28 of the 54 tanks in the depot and create safety buffer and green zones around the compound. Liquefied petroleum gas terminals in the depot also had to be removed.

In turn, Atienza and the DOE would enable the three companies to continuously operate the depot in compliance with legal requirements.

Atienza had contended that the ordinance was superseded by the MOU and the resolutions. But the court noted that the mayor also "confusingly" argued that the ordinance and the MOU were not inconsistent with each other and that the MOU did not amend the ordinance.

Atienza also insisted that the ordinance was valid and remained in effect, and that the understanding with the oil companies did not prevent him from implementing the ordinance.

The tribunal said it was not necessary to resolve the issue of whether the MOU repealed the ordinance.

It said that even if the MOU was inconsistent with Ordinance No. 8027, the resolutions that ratified it only made the MOU effective until April 30, 2003.

"Thus, there is nothing that legally hinders respondent from enforcing Ordinance No. 8027," the high court said.

Transfer to safer place

Atienza said yesterday that he would abide by the Supreme Court decision.

"I concur with the Supreme Court's decision. I think we've given them (oil companies) enough time to move out. We hope they will do so and transfer to a safer place," the mayor said.

The ordinance was approved by Manila City Council on Nov. 28, 2001, effective Dec. 28, 2001. The MOU, ratified as Resolution No. 97, was effective for six months starting July 25, 2002.

Another resolution, No. 13, extended the validity of Resolution No. 97 to April 30, 2003 and authorized Atienza to issue special business permits to the oil companies.

Unable to sleep

The extensions moved SJS and Manila residents Vladimir T. Cabigao and Bonifacio S. Tumbokon to file an action for mandamus against Atienza at the Supreme Court.

The mandamus is "a petition compelling a public officer to perform a ministerial duty."

Cabigao said yesterday that his group knew it had a "big chance" when it filed the mandamus in December 2001.

"The Supreme Court upheld the rule of law. The implementation of an ordinance is the duty of the local chief executive. A resolution cannot supersede the ordinance," he said.

Cabigao, a Pandacan resident, said he had been unable to sleep in the aftermath of the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001 and the Bali bombings in 2003.

"There were talks that after Bali, the Philippines would be next," he said. "It would be a major conflagration if a terror attack should happen. They say it could even reach Malacañang."

Cabigao, a member of party-list Abakada Guro (formerly SJS), said the local government's delay in imposing the ordinance posed an imminent threat to residents, and caused his group to file the mandamus.

Cabigao also said he expected an appeal of the Supreme Court decision, which is allowed within 15 days.

Roberto Kanapi, Shell general manager for external affairs, said the oil firm could file a motion for intervention.

Chevron said it would also probably file a motion for intervention.

The country's three largest oil firms, however, were in agreement that the high court's decision was based on a city ordinance that had already been superseded by a newer one.

"The subject ordinance (City Ordinance 8027) of the Supreme Court decision has been superseded by City Ordinance 8119, or the Comprehensive Land Use Plan of Manila. The CLUP gives oil companies a seven-year period to relocate its terminals," said Petron public affairs manager Virginia Ruivivar.

With a report from Abigail L. Ho

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Resto loses F&B contract, blames Pagcor

Gaming agency says no new agreement has been signed

By Julie M. Aurelio

NEARLY 60 EMPLOYEES OF A restaurant at the Airport Casino Filipino in Parañaque City were sent home after the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor) cut off the establishment's signing privileges on Feb. 28.

Gina Lumauig, owner of the Via Bellagio Bar and Restaurant, said Pagcor's move has deprived her establishment of most of its income.

Gina is the daughter of former Ifugao Rep. Gualberto Lumauig, former spokesperson of the Lakas party. The congressman was a supporter of President Macapagal-Arroyo until he moved over to the late Sen. Raul Roco's camp during the May 2004 election.

Since its opening in November 2002, Via Bellagio has catered to customers playing high stakes games inside the airport casino. Gina said they signed a three-year contract with Pagcor to provide food and beverages to players.

Having signing privileges, she explained, meant players are entitled to complimentary food and drinks served by food concessionaires like her restaurant.

Payments for the food and drinks, in turn, are shouldered by Pagcor.

Gina said that almost 99% of the income of concessionaires inside the airport casino come from signing privileges.

In November 2005, just before the expiration of Via Bellagio's three-year contract with the gaming agency, Gina said she began negotiating for its renewal with Pagcor chief operating officer Rafael "Butch" Francisco and senior branch manager Rogelio Bangsil.

She said she was also given a copy of an internal memorandum issued by Pagcor vice president of operations Rene Figueroa stating that the agency's board of directors had approved a three-year extension of her restaurant's contract. But in January 2006, Gina said she received a memorandum from Bangsil, ordering her and her staff to vacate the premises in 30 days.

"They did not give us any reason. I tried talking to Pagcor officials but nothing came out (of those talks)," she explained.

Gina said she filed a case against Pagcor before the court which later issued an injunction.

Last November, the case was referred to the Philippine Mediation Center. Gina said her father met with Francisco who assured the latter that the matter would soon be resolved.

Last month, the gaming agency's legal department sent a draft compromise agreement for comments and eventual signing early this week. But Gina said their signing privileges were suddenly revoked by Pagcor without any reason,

"We tried calling officials (Francisco and senior branch manager Bobby Reyes) but to no avail," Gina said.

She added that Pagcor's arbitrary decision to "virtually paralyze" the restaurant's operations was in "brazen disregard of a court injunction restraining Pagcor from doing anything that would adversely affect" Via Bellagio's normal operations.

A Pagcor official, however, denied that the decision to close down the restaurant was an arbitrary move. "Their contract was supposed to expire in November 2005. But Pagcor doesn't want to renew the contract because it needs the space to expand the casino," corporate communications director Dodie King said in a phone interview. While there was an internal memorandum for the renewal of the restaurant's contract, the actual contract had yet to be signed. In addition, the memorandum, which was approved only by the agency's board of directors, could not be considered a legally binding contract, he added.

"The board has all the right to rescind its decision because there is no contract yet," King said. "Nothing arbitrary. No politics involved," he added, when asked if the move was prompted by Lumauig's antigovernment stance. Pagcor, however, is considering letting Via Bellagio stay in the casino for six more months as a sign of goodwill, he said.

Makati court junks Leviste petition for hospital detention

By DJ Yap

FORMER BATANGAS GOV. JOSE Antonio Leviste will be sent back to the Makati City Jail once he is discharged from the hospital.

In a ruling dated March 6, Judge Elmo Alameda of the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 denied Leviste's request that he be allowed to remain indefinitely at the Makati Medical Center.

"Having been duly apprised of the overall medical and physical condition of the accused, the court believes that the accused should be returned to jail but only upon discharge from the hospital by his attending physician," Alameda said.

He added that Leviste may continue his medication at the Makati City Jail with the aid of a medical officer or a nurse.

Leviste, charged with the murder of his longtime aide Rafael de las Alas, has been confined in the MMC since Feb. 23 for hypertension and gastrointestinal bleeding, but his doctor said he was ready to be discharged.

Dr. Raynato Kasilag, Leviste's private physician, earlier told the judge during a hearing that his patient could leave the hospital after a few days.

In his order, Alameda dismissed a motion by Leviste that he be transferred indefinitely to his hospital room, as there was no "legal or moral justification" for it.

Confidence

The court expressed confidence in the competence of the city jail medical officer who rushed Leviste to the hospital after the former governor complained of dizziness and shortness of breath.

Should his illness recur, Leviste may be brought back to the hospital upon the medical officer's recommendation, Alameda said, noting the proximity of the hospital to the jail.

"The medical condition of the accused can easily be monitored by his private physicians who can be contacted through cellphone," the judge added.

Alameda also denied for lack of merit Leviste's motion for reconsideration appealing the judge's decision not to inhibit himself from the case for perceived lack of impartiality.

In a related development, the court gave state prosecutors the chance to prove that their evidence against the accused is strong and that he should not be allowed to post bail.

DID YOU KNOW

THE WORST hotel fire so far in the country occurred on Aug. 18, 2001 when a blaze gutted the Manor Hotel on Kamias Road, Quezon City at dawn. Seventy-four persons were killed while 41 others were injured during the fire. Most of the victims were delegates to the Dawn Flower Destiny Conference, a Christian meeting led by an American preacher. The hotel owners were later charged in court for violating fire safety regulations while the Ombudsman fired the Quezon City engineer and other City Hall employees for negligence.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

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Robbers' link to dismissed cops probed

By Margaux C. Ortiz

FROM LAW ENFORCERS TO lawbreakers.

Officials of the Quezon City Police District are looking into the possibility that former policemen could be behind the recent proliferation of robberies and holdup incidents carried out by motorcycle-riding suspects in the city.

Supt. Asper Cabula, chief of the QCPD Public Information Office, said they are now checking the background of all Quezon City policemen who were dismissed from the service to determine their means of livelihood.

"We began suspecting that dismissed law enforcers could be behind these robberies after we observed that most of them knew the location of police checkpoints and chokepoints," Cabula told the INQUIRER in an interview yesterday.

He added that the robbers also had clear ideas about the routes of police mobile patrol units—information that only law enforcers had access to.

According to Cabula, the QCPD intelligence division has obtained a list of all dismissed policemen, most of whom were discharged for drugs or for being AWOL (absent without official leave).

"We are going to check the former policemen's means of livelihood and compare these with their lifestyles," Cabula said, adding that the list was 10 sheets of paper long.

"We immediately consider as suspects those who live the high life without having permanent occupations," he added.

In the latest incident involving motorcycle-riding suspects, two alleged robbers died in a shootout with operatives of the QCPD District Intelligence and Operation Unit (DIOU) early yesterday morning in Barangay Paligsahan, Quezon City.

Investigation showed that members of the DIOU, led by Chief Insp. Ipil Duenas, were conducting surveillance operations at the corner of Scout Lozano and Mother Ignacia Streets when they saw the suspects riding on a motorcycle without a plate number.

The police tried to flag down the vehicle but one of the suspects suddenly pulled out a .38 caliber revolver and fired at them.

A shootout ensued, ending in the death of the two suspects, one of whom was identified as Darius Masangkay, according to a police report.

Apart from the revolver, the investigators also found a fan knife in Masangkay's back pocket.

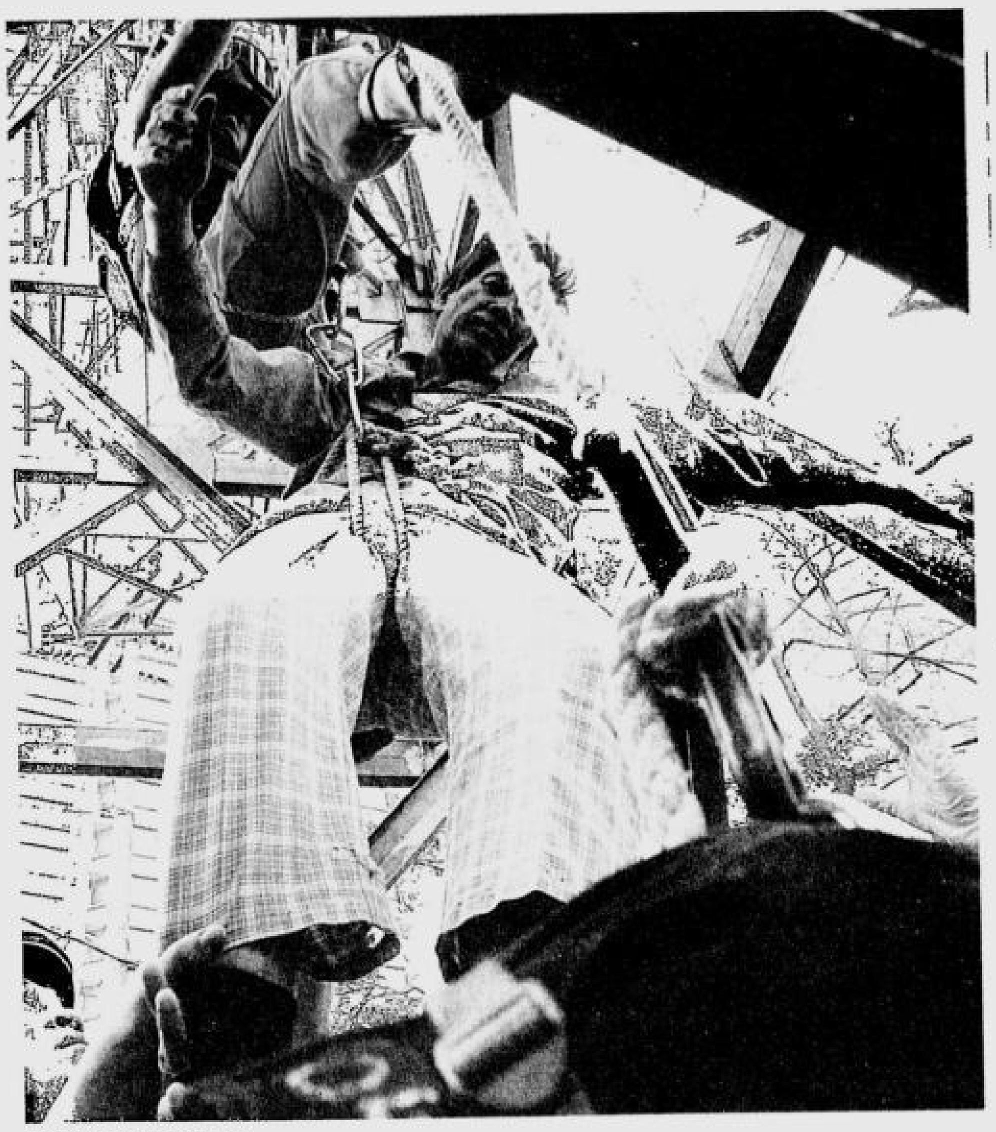
The police also arrested yesterday another suspect on board a motorcycle who held up a student of the University of the Philippines last Sunday.

Charges of robbery will be filed against Djoser Sioco, a resident of 25 General Road, Veterans Village in Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City.

Investigation showed that Jolerie Ann Pacumo was walking with her friends at 8:25 p.m. on Baluyot Street near the UP when the motorcycle-riding suspect took her wallet at knifepoint.

However, Pacumo took note of the motorcycle's plate number and filed a complaint with the police. Yesterday morning, the suspect was invited to the police station where the victim confronted him.

"The victim was able to identify him through his build and voice, even if she was not able to see his face during the incident because he was wearing a helmet," Cabula said.



DOWN AND OUT

A rescue team persuaded Henry Almoite, 52, to come down after he climbed a huge billboard on Timog Avenue in Quezon City yesterday. Police said Almoite only wanted to call the government's attention to his son who he said had been detained in jail for allegedly being a member of the bandit group Abu Sayyaf.

JOAN BONDOC

Student dies after jump from condo

By Tina G. Santos

AN 18-YEAR-OLD STUDENT committed suicide by jumping from the 18th floor of a condominium building on España Street, Manila shortly before noon yesterday.

Investigators of the Manila Police District were still trying to find out why Teresa Campana, a student of a university in Quezon City, killed herself.

No personal problem

Some of her relatives told the police that they were unaware of any personal problem that could have prompted the victim to take her own life.

Campana was rushed to the hospital after she jumped from her unit on the 18th floor of the España Tower on España St., Sampaloc, Manila.

The incident occurred at 11:50 a.m, according to the police.

Campana landed on a ledge on the eighth floor with severe injuries in the head and body.

She died hours later in the hospital while undergoing treatment.

Review plea bargain deal, Atong lawyers told

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE SANDIGANBAYAN'S SPECIAL Division yesterday asked the lawyers of Charlie "Atong" Ang to review his plea bargaining agreement, saying some portions seemed to implicate him.

Presiding Justice Teresita Leonardo de Castro yesterday ordered Ang's counsel to file a clarification on the deal before the antigraft court makes a decision as it contained "ambiguous" statements that would indicate Ang's guilt in the crime of plunder rather than indirect bribery.

Ang, a coaccused in the P4.1-billion plunder case against deposed President Estrada, entered into a plea bargain agreement to avoid a possible sentence of 40 years.

The deal, which contained information that Ang conspired with Estrada to divert P130 million in tobacco excise tax funds, would allow him to enter a plea of guilty for the lesser offense of bribery, which carries a six-year prison term.

"The main concern of the court is to be certain that Ang knows exactly what the plea bargaining agreement is for as the deal may contain more than what he wants to admit," the presiding justice said.

The justices also raised this question: "If he confessed to conspiracy, how can he plead to a lesser offense?"

"We want to know from him if he understood the plea bargaining agreement," the justices added.

Ang's lawyers, Ruth Castelo and Alfredo Villamor, earlier filed a motion for early resolution of the agreement. "Several weeks have passed already since Ang's plea bargaining agreement has been submitted for the resolution. Up to this time, it remains unresolved," the motion stated.

METROBRIEFS

Man hit by train killed

A MIDDLE-AGED man was killed yesterday morning in Taguig City after he was hit by a commuter train. Police identified the victim as Sisirio Martinez, 56, a resident of the Philippine National Railways site in Western Bicutan, Taguig. Initial investigation by the city's traffic section revealed that the victim was walking near the rail tracks when he was hit by the train. SPO2 Pedro Sententa said the train was headed toward Manila when the accident took place at 10:22 a.m. Martinez sustained injuries all over his body and was rushed to the nearby Taguig-Pateros Hospital. The victim, however, was pronounced dead on arrival by Dr. Mary Labios.

Julie M. Aurelio

Rails tragedy in Makati

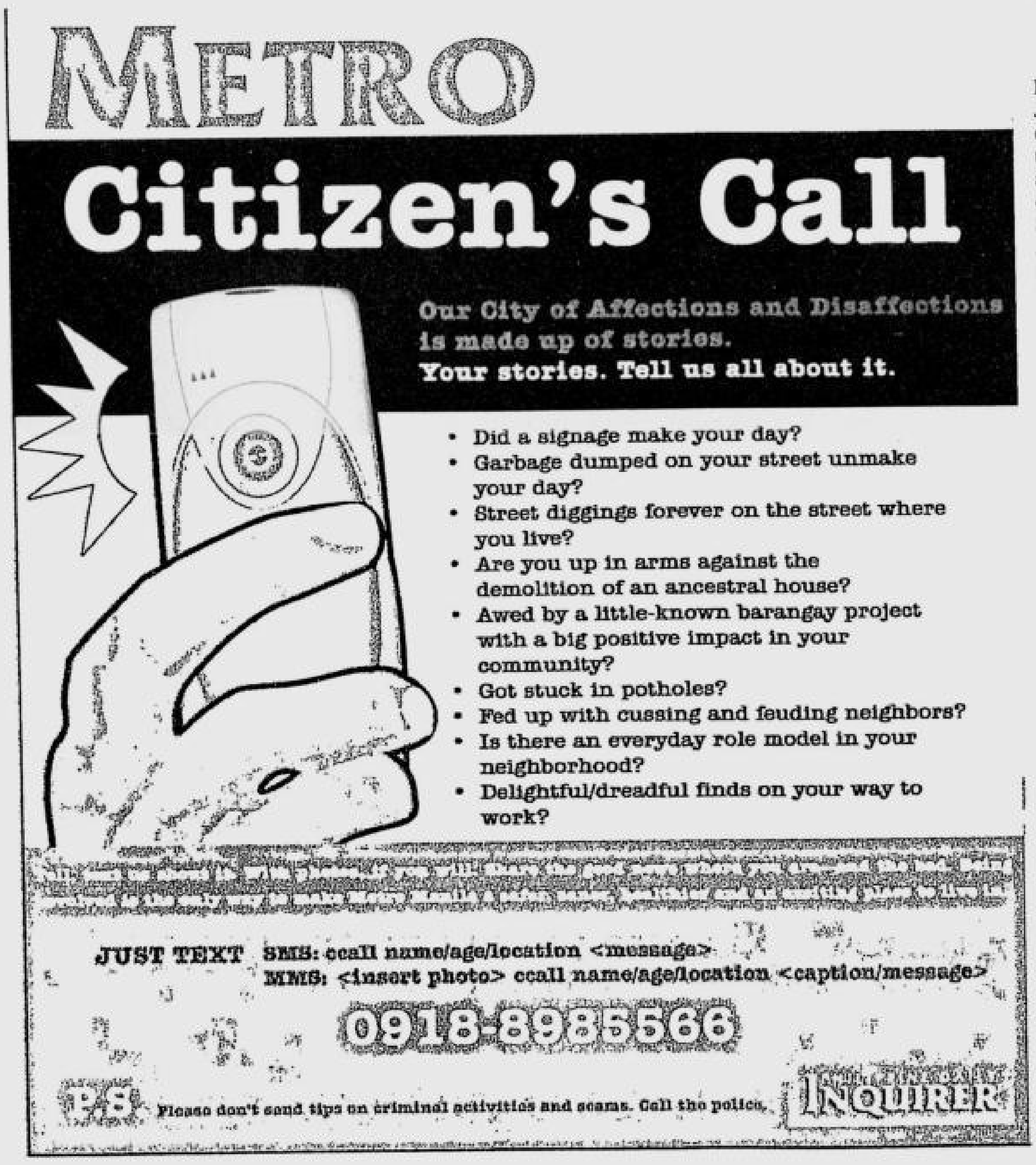
A WOMAN was run over and dragged to her death by a Philippine National Railways train in Makati City yesterday morning. The victim, identified only as "Grace," was badly mutilated and barely recognizable after getting hit by the Manila-bound train at 10:30 a.m. on the tracks at the corner of Arnaiz Street, traffic police said. Witnesses told police the victim seemed drunk and stepped on the tracks even though the oncoming Train 304, with body number 5003, was in full sight. "The train was not running at full speed because it had just left the station, which was just a few meters from where she was hit," said SPO3 Abner Bibon of the Makati traffic management section. Bibon said neighbors and witnesses described the victim as a beggar and a vagrant, who often asked for money to buy liquor. The victim's remains were taken to the Funeraria Filipinas but as of yesterday, no family members had come to claim the body, the policeman said.

DJ Yap

More police precincts

A POLICE Community Precinct for every barangay in Las Piñas City. Mayor Imelda Aguilar gave this assurance yesterday to residents, saying that putting up precincts in each of the city's 20 barangays would enhance police visibility. "The safety of our residents must not be compromised," she said in a statement. Of the city's 20 barangays, only 11 have their own PCPs located in Barangays Daniel Fajardo, Zapote, Pamplona 1, CAA, Pilar, Talon 5, Talon 2, Talon 1, Almanza 2, Manuyo 2 and E. Aldana. Aguilar said she hopes to put up nine more precincts to ensure quick response to reports of crime and boost police visibility as well. She appealed to barangay officials to continue mobilizing their crime brigades in monitoring the peace and order situation in their respective barangays. The crime brigades are tasked to report the existence of illegal drugs such as shabu and marijuana, illegal cockfights, video karera games and other forms of vices. "These vices breed crime and are the start of the breakdown of peace and order," the mayor said.

Julie M. Aurelio



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INQUIRER

Nepotism at the Court of Appeals

ON TARGE

Ramon Tulfo

IT MUST HAVE TAKEN CHIEF Justice Reynato Puno a lot of courage to expose the nepotism in the judiciary by issuing an order banning spouses and offspring of justices at the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the Sandiganbayan and Court of Tax Appeals from the payroll of these higher courts.

Beginning March 31, the employment of spouses and children of justices in the high tribunal, appellate court, Sandiganbayan and Court of Tax Appeals is deemed terminated.

Puno's order is meant "to enforce the letter and the spirit of the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary calling for an ethical judiciary that is above suspicion."

"It is essential that judges, individually and collectively, respect and honor judicial office as a public trust and strive to enhance and maintain respect for the judicial system," the Chief Justice said.

Puno's order showed that nepotism in the higher courts has been going on for sometime now.

My sources in the high tribunal say there is not a single Supreme Court justice who has a spouse or offspring employed in his or her office.

But the Court of Appeals has many. Among the prominent ones at the appellate court are Presiding Justice Ruben T. Reyes and Justice Rodrigo V. Cosico, whose wives are employed as their personal secretaries.

The appellate court justices who have their children working in their offices are Hakim S. Abdulwahid, Renato Dacudao, Sesinando E. Villon, Elvie John Asuncion, Enrico E. Lanzanas, Rosalinda Asuncion-Vicente, Normandie B. Pizarro, Bienvenido I. Reyes and Juan Q. Enriquez.

Dear readers, these are the honorable justices who pass judgment on ordinary mortals who happen to have cases pending in their court.

* * *

The wife of a justice, according to my sources at the appellate court, treats all minor employees as if they were her servants.

The justice, allegedly upon the suggestion of his wife, ordered that the wives of justices wear a different uniform from ordinary employees to distinguish them from the female rank and file. For some reason, the order was not enforced.

* * *

An alleged oil smuggler probably has protectors at the Department of Justice (DOJ), according to my sources at the Bureau of Customs.

Customs sources say the DOJ has been sitting on the smuggling and tax evasion cases filed by the bureau against Oilink International Corp. The DOJ, my sources say, is not helping the customs bureau get documentary evidence such as bills of lading and outward manifests from the South Korean customs office.

Just when they are so close to getting evidence against Oilink owner Paul Co, customs investigators are stymied by the DOJ's delay in getting documents from South Korea through the Mutual Assistance Treaty.

A very influential person is reportedly preventing the DOJ from prosecuting Co, who was listed as one of the country's biggest oil smugglers during a Senate investigation in 2004.

What is needed to prosecute him, according to my sources, is for the DOJ to obtain documents from the justice ministry of South Korea to certify that the "smoking gun" documents with the Philippine customs bureau are authentic.

"If this government is serious in curbing oil smuggling, it should lose no time in securing the documents from South Korea," said a customs source. The government loses P6 billion yearly from oil smuggling, he added.

UN mulls new sanctions against Iran

UNITED NATIONS—THE UN SEcurity Council on Tuesday considered new sanctions against Iran over its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment, including an arms embargo and a travel ban.

Britain's UN Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry, acting on behalf of six powers trying to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, briefed the 10 non-permanent members of the Council on "elements" of a resolution that would build on UN sanctions adopted last December.

The proposed resolution would include a travel ban, an arms embargo, financial and trade restrictions and expanding a list of people or entities involved in nuclear and ballistic missile work subjected to an assets freeze, said South Africa's UN Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, who chairs the Security Council for March, after the briefing.

The new measures were discussed by envoys of the council's five permanent members—Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States—plus Germany Monday on instruction from senior officials of their respective foreign ministries who discussed the issue by telephone Saturday.

Jones Parry described them as "an incremental ratcheting up" of the December sanctions, adding that the door was still open for Iran to return to the negotiating table by complying with demands that it freeze uranium enrichment.

The sanctions adopted by the council in December included a ban on the sale of nuclear and ballistic missile-related materials to the Islamic republic and a freeze on financial assets of Iranians involved in illicit atomic and ballistic missile research.

The punitive measures were imposed after Tehran spurned UN demands that it suspend uranium enrichment, which can be used to develop a nuclear bomb.

After a meeting of envoys of the six powers Tuesday afternoon, Chinese Ambassador Wang Guangya made it clear that they had not yet begun drafting a text.

"We are comparing notes ... and we will continue the discussions," he noted.

Jones Parry said no date had yet been fixed for their next meeting.

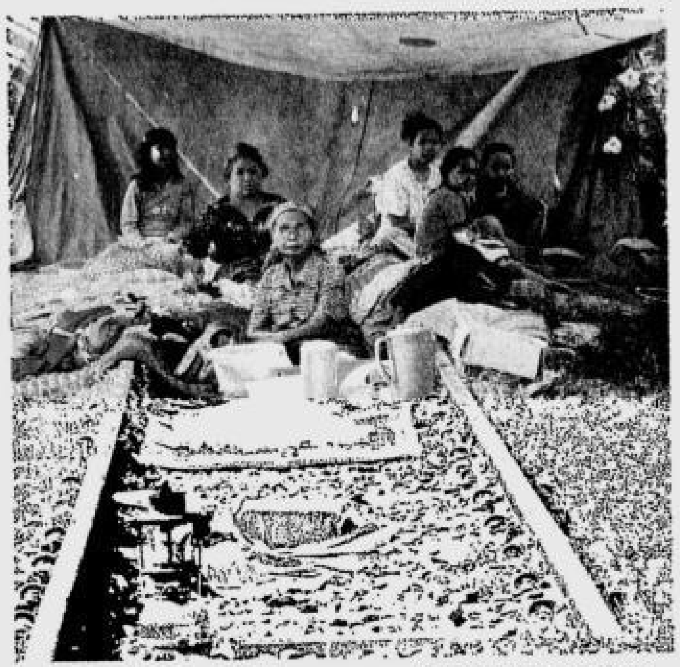
On Monday, Russian Ambassador Vitaly said "there was a very good chance" that a draft would be approved by the full council before the end of the month.

Kumalo said he expected a draft to emerge "in the middle of the week," although a Western diplomat said this was unlikely to happen Wednesday.

Earlier Tuesday, France's UN Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sabliere said: "Our objective is to go swiftly ... But what we would like is to have unity, keep the six, keep the council united." German Ambassador Thomas Matussek Monday said the proposed ban on arms exports to Iran faced stiff opposition from Russia and China, which maintains close economic and energy ties with Tehran.

And he indicated that his own government was reluctant to agree to restrictions on export credits.

"We do not want to hurt our small and medium-sized enterprises ... So we have to calibrate in a way that we get the message across. On the other hand we don't want to shoot ourselves in the foot," he told AFP. *AFP*



WOMEN stay at a makeshift camp on a rail in Solok, March 7 after a 6.3-magnitude earthquake rocked Indonesia's Sumatra island. At least 71 people were killed and scores injured, officials said. AFP

Indonesia steps up rescue after quake

PADANG, INDONESIA—AID BEgan to flow on Wednesday to survivors of deadly earthquakes in Indonesia's West Sumatra province as search and rescue teams stepped up efforts to find victims who may still be trapped beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings.

Officials said between 70 to 100 people were killed by Tuesday's two quakes—also felt in neighboring Singapore and Malaysia—but many more were injured and thousands spent a night in the open, frightened of further tremors.

The disaster management agency in West Sumatra province, where the 6.4 magnitude quake and a 6.3 "aftershock" was centered, put the confirmed death figure at 72 on Wednesday morning.

As dawn broke on Wednesday, thousands of people in Sumatra were camped in tents outside their homes or in open fields.

Authorities said dozens were feared still trapped under rubble.

"I cannot predict how many people are still trapped because the process is still on. However, there are many houses collapsed, and I believe that the inhabitants are in them," Syamsu Rahim, the mayor of Solok town, said late on Tuesday.

An official in Padang said on Wednesday that casualty figures were likely to change because there were still many people trapped and the rescue process would have to be done manually as heavy machinery cannot reach some areas.

Hospitals in some areas were overwhelmed with injured. Many people had fled their homes and fears of aftershocks pushed authorities in Padang, the West Sumatra provincial capital, to set up emergency tents at a soccer field.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who was scheduled to visit Medan in North Sumatra on Wednesday to watch a harvest event and meet local community and religious leaders, would go instead to Solok in West Sumatra, state news agency Antara reported.

The government sent in the military and police to assist with rescue efforts while the Red Cross also deployed a rapid response team to assess the damage and needs of victims. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Italian journalist kidnapped

KANDAHAR—The Taliban claimed Wednesday it kidnapped an Italian journalist, three days after an Italian newspaper lost touch with a veteran correspondent in southern Afghanistan. A Taliban spokesperson claimed the militia captured a man who introduced himself as a Briton who worked for Italian daily La Repubblica—the same paper that raised the alarm about its reporter Daniele Mastrogiacomo. "The man we arrested is an Italian and he told us he worked for the Rome-based La Repubblica newspaper," Qari Yousef Ahmadi, a man who claims to speak for the Taliban, told The Associated Press by satellite telephone from an undisclosed location. *AP*

35 hurt in Iran quake

TEHRAN—Thirty-five people were injured when an earthquake measuring 4.8 on the Richter scale struck the city of Daroud in western Iran before dawn on Wednesday, local officials said. Most of the injuries were caused by shards of glass from broken windows or when dazed victims were trampled in the aftermath of the quake at 2 a.m., city governor Nasrollah Rashno said, according to the IRNA agency. Rashno added that most of the casualties were only lightly injured. The earthquake in Lorestan province comes just under a year after a much stronger quake of 6.0 magnitude struck the same area, killing around 70 people and leaving thousands homeless. *AFP*

Guantanamo hearings to begin Friday

WASHINGTON—Hearings on "enemy combatant" status of 14 top terror suspects including suspected Sept. 11 plotter Khalid Sheikh Mohammed begin Friday behind closed doors at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the Pentagon said Tuesday. Pentagon spokesperson Bryan Whitman said the media will be barred from covering the so-called combatant status review tribunals for the first time to protect classified information. "We will commence with the combatant status review tribunals for the 14 high value detainees who came into DoD (Department of Defense) custody in September, commencing this Friday," Whitman said. *AFP*

US medic deserter gets 8 months

WUERZBURG, GERMANY—A US army medic who fled his base and refused to return to Iraq with his unit was sentenced on Tuesday to eight months in prison for desertion. Mexican-born combat medic Agustin Aguayo, who describes himself as a conscientious objector, is one of the first US military personnel to be convicted of desertion in relation to the Iraq conflict. The ruling comes as support in the United States wanes for the war. Aguayo, 35, pleaded guilty to going absent without leave and missing his deployment, but denied charges of full desertion. But Colonel Peter Masterton, the judge at the court-martial in southern Germany, said the court had found Aguayo guilty as charged and sentenced him to eight months in prison. *Reuters*

Moderate 4.6 quake in New Zealand

WELLINGTON—A moderate magnitude 4.6 earthquake jolted parts of New Zealand's North Island Wednesday, the nation's geological agency, GNS Science, reported on its web site. There were no immediate reports of damage or injury. The quake, the second in less than 24 hours, rattled the lower North Island at 8:01 p.m. New Zealand time. GNS Science said the temblor was centered off the island's west coast at a depth of 7 km. Some 22 hours earlier a magnitude 4.7 quake shook the northwest area of South Island at 10:27 p.m. Tuesday. It was centered 30 km southeast of the town of Karamea at a depth of 5 km. *AP*

Russian mayor detained for corruption

MOSCOW—Russian prosecutors have detained the mayor of the far eastern city of Vladivostok on suspicion of embezzlement and abuse of office, the Prosecutor-General's office said on Wednesday. Vladivostok, a port city and fishing industry center on the Pacific Ocean, has a reputation as a hotbed of lawlessness. Organized crime bosses are powerful there and one previous mayor is on trial on corruption charges. Serving Mayor Vladimir Nikolayev was suspended last week over allegations he funded his bodyguards from city coffers, used police cars for private escort duty and flew on expensive charter planes. He has denied any wrongdoing. *Reuters*

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

FORMER Bush White House aide Lewis "Scooter" Libby walks with wife Harriet Grant (right) outside the courthouse after he was convicted of four federal crimes at the US Federal Courthouse in Washington, March 6. REUTERS

Former White House aide convicted in CIA leak case

WASHINGTON—FORMER WHITE HOUSE AIDE Lewis "Scooter" Libby was convicted of perjury and obstruction of justice Tuesday, after a trial that rocked Washington's political and media elite and probed deep into the US case for war with Iraq.

Libby, ex-chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney, faces up to 25 years in prison for his role in a scandal centering on the outing of a CIA spy and a row over Saddam Hussein's alleged bid to build nuclear weapons.

The jury reached the verdict after 10 days of deliberations, convicting the 56-year-old of four of the five counts against him, including lying to the FBI, in a new body blow to the politically weakened Bush administration.

Libby had denied wrongdoing in a case over whether White House officials leaked the name of CIA officer Valerie Plame to avenge criticisms of the White House rationale for war with Iraq by her ex-diplomat husband Joseph Wilson.

Cheney said he was "very disappointed" to see his former right-hand man found guilty, and saddened for Libby and his family.

"As I have said before, Scooter has served our nation tirelessly and with great distinction through many years of public service," he said.

The White House said President George W. Bush "respected the jury's verdict, that he was saddened for Scooter Libby and his family." But spokesperson Dana Perino refused to discuss whether Bush would consider using his constitutional power to pardon Libby, who also served as "assistant to the president" before he resigned when he was indicted in October 2005. *AFP*

Indon jet bursts into flames; 23 killed

YOGYAKARTA—AN INDONESIAN PASSENGER jet overshot the runway and burst into flames on Wednesday as it landed in the cultural capital of Yogyakarta, but most of the 140 people on board survived.

Dozens of passengers leapt from the national carrier Garuda Airline plane's emergency exits into surrounding rice paddy fields to escape the inferno, which reduced the plane to a smouldering wreck of twisted metal.

Twenty-three people, including two Australians, died in the crash, health ministry national crisis center chief Rustam Pakaya said in a late afternoon text message to Reuters.

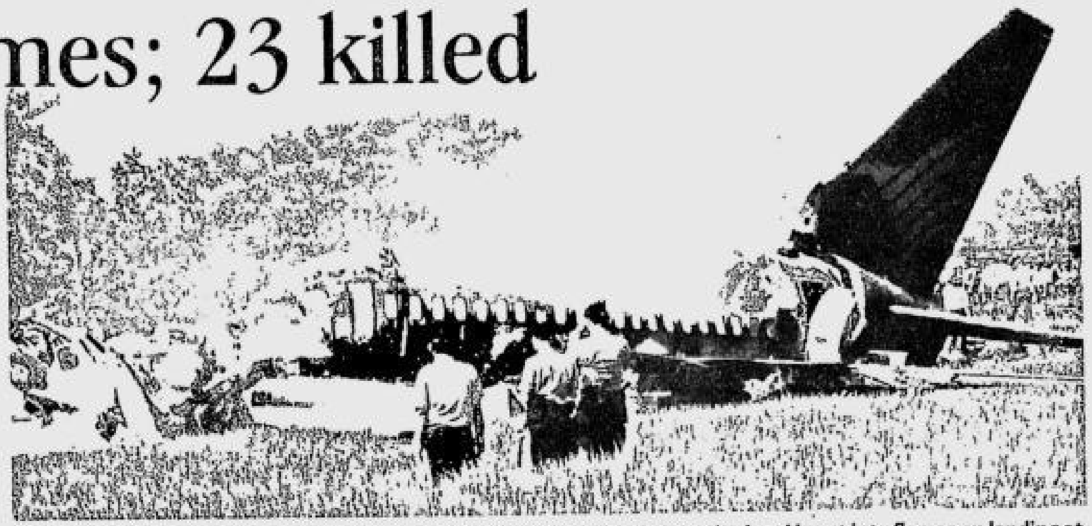
Earlier, a provincial government official had put the toll at 48, while Garuda subsequently said it was 22.

Pujobroto, chief spokesperson for Garuda, said flight GA 200 was a Boeing 737-400 plane carrying 133 passengers and seven crew when it crashed at around 7 a.m. after a scheduled flight from Jakarta.

One survivor told Reuters that passengers had been warned the flight would be turbulent.

"As we approached the ground and I could see roofs from our window, the plane was still swaying and shaking," said Ruth Meigi Panggabean, who works for the aid group World Vision.

"Then the plane was slammed to the ground and skidded forward and slammed once again before it came to a stop," she said. *Reuters*



INDONESIAN police stand next to the wreckage of a Garuda jet that crashed and burst into flames on landing at Indonesia's Yogyakarta airport on Wednesday. The plane had 140 people on board. REUTERS

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Ban eyed on planes over 10 years

JAKARTA—INDONESIA IS PLANNING to ban local carriers from operating jetliners more than 10 years old as part of a safety campaign following a string of crashes and accidents, the government said Wednesday.

The plan is likely to be unpopular with Indonesia's booming airline industry. Most experts say that maintenance of a plane and the number of takeoffs and landings it has performed—not its age—are the most important factors in preventing accidents.

It also may force some out of the more than 20 Indonesian airlines out of business or into mergers with rivals, an aviation analyst said.

"The main thing is we need a renewal of our fleet," said Transport Minister Hatta Rajasa after a Cabinet meeting held on board the presidential train—a decision taken to highlight the government's concerns on transport safety after several deadly accidents on air, land and sea.

Transport Ministry spokesperson Bambang Ervan said the proposed regulation, which Rajasa said would not need parliamentary approval, would ban "all jets used for commercial purposes" that were more than 10 years old.

Rajasa, who has been under pressure to resign following the accidents, said the government also was planning a ban on old ferries, but gave no mor details.

Currently, the age limit for planes in Indonesia is 20 years.

Tengku Burhanuddin, secretary general of the Indonesian National Air Carriers Association, said the body had yet to be informed of the plan.

"We want to know what the reasons for this are," he said.

Aviation analyst Dudi Sudibyo said the average age of Indonesia's more than 300 jets was around 10.5 years, meaning massive investment in the industry would be needed if the plan was enforced.

He said, however, that forcing the airlines to modernize their fleet would likely lead to a much needed consolidation of companies. *AP*

Suicide blasts kill 149 Shiite pilgrims heading for holy city

HILLA—INSURGENTS KILLED 149 Shiite pilgrims heading for the holy Iraqi city of Kerbala on Tuesday, including 115 when two suicide bombers blew themselves up in one of the deadliest attacks of the 4-year war.

The attacks, just over a year after the bombing of a Shiite shrine in the city of Samarra, are likely to increase sectarian tensions between majority Shiites and Sunni Arabs that are pushing the country to the brink of all-out civil war.

Two suicide bombers strapped with explosives detonated themselves almost simultaneously in a busy street lined with tents in the city of Hilla, south of Baghdad, killing 115 people, local hospital officials said.

The tents had been set up to offer food, drink and resting areas for pilgrims. At least 200 people were wounded in that attack, the hospital officials said.

"I saw one of the suicide bombers. He was about 40 years old. He blew himself up and I saw parts of bodies flying around," a witness, who declined to give his name, told Reuters.

Another witness described scenes of chaos, with sandals and tattered clothes lying among pools of blood and tents on fire.

"I watched the second bomber run into the crowd and blow himself up. Everyone around him was shredded to pieces," the witness told Reuters as he sobbed.

Shiite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki blamed Sunni militants and supporters of former President Saddam Hussein for the "barbaric crime," according to a statement from his office.

US President George W. Bush insisted on Tuesday a new security plan in Baghdad was making gradual progress, despite the killing of nine US soldiers north of the capital in two separate bomb attacks on Monday.

More than 3,185 American soldiers have died in Iraq since the US-led invasion in March 2003.

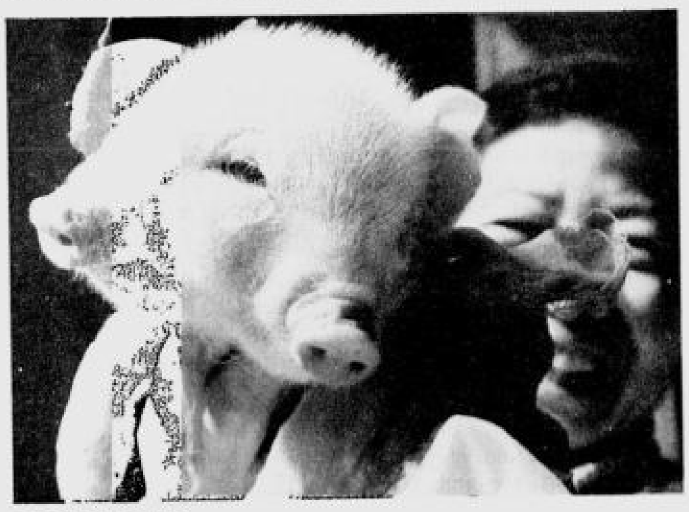
Defending his plans to deploy 21,500 more US troops to Iraq, Bush said in a speech to the American Legion veterans organization: "The mission is America's mission and our failure would be America's failure." Security in Hilla is tight for fear of a repetition of suicide bombings and attacks on Shiite religious rituals by suspected Sunni insurgents of the sort that killed 171 people in Baghdad and Kerbala in March 2004.

Insurgents also launched attacks on pilgrims in and around Baghdad, again defying Maliki's crackdown.

Among those attacks, a car bomb in the southern Baghdad district of Doura killed 12 people, police said.

Masses of Shiite pilgrims are heading to Kerbala on foot and by bus to commemorate Arbain, the end of a 40-day mourning period since Ashura, which marks the death of Prophet Mohammad's grandson in 680. Kerbala, one the holiest cities in Shiite Islam, lies 110 km south of Baghdad. Hilla is nearby.

It is just over a year since the Feb. 22 bombing of a Shiite shrine in the city of Samarra. That attack, blamed on Sunni al-Qaida, unleashed the wave of sectarian violence that threatens to tear Iraq apart. *Reuters*



FREAK BOAR

Liu Shuping, a farmer specializing in raising pigs, presents a newly-born piglet with one head, two mouths, two noses and three eyes, for photographers in Xi'an, northwest China's Shannxi Province March 6. Experts attributed it's condition to genetic variation. Picture taken March 6. REUTERS

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■ **Mavs first in playoffs**
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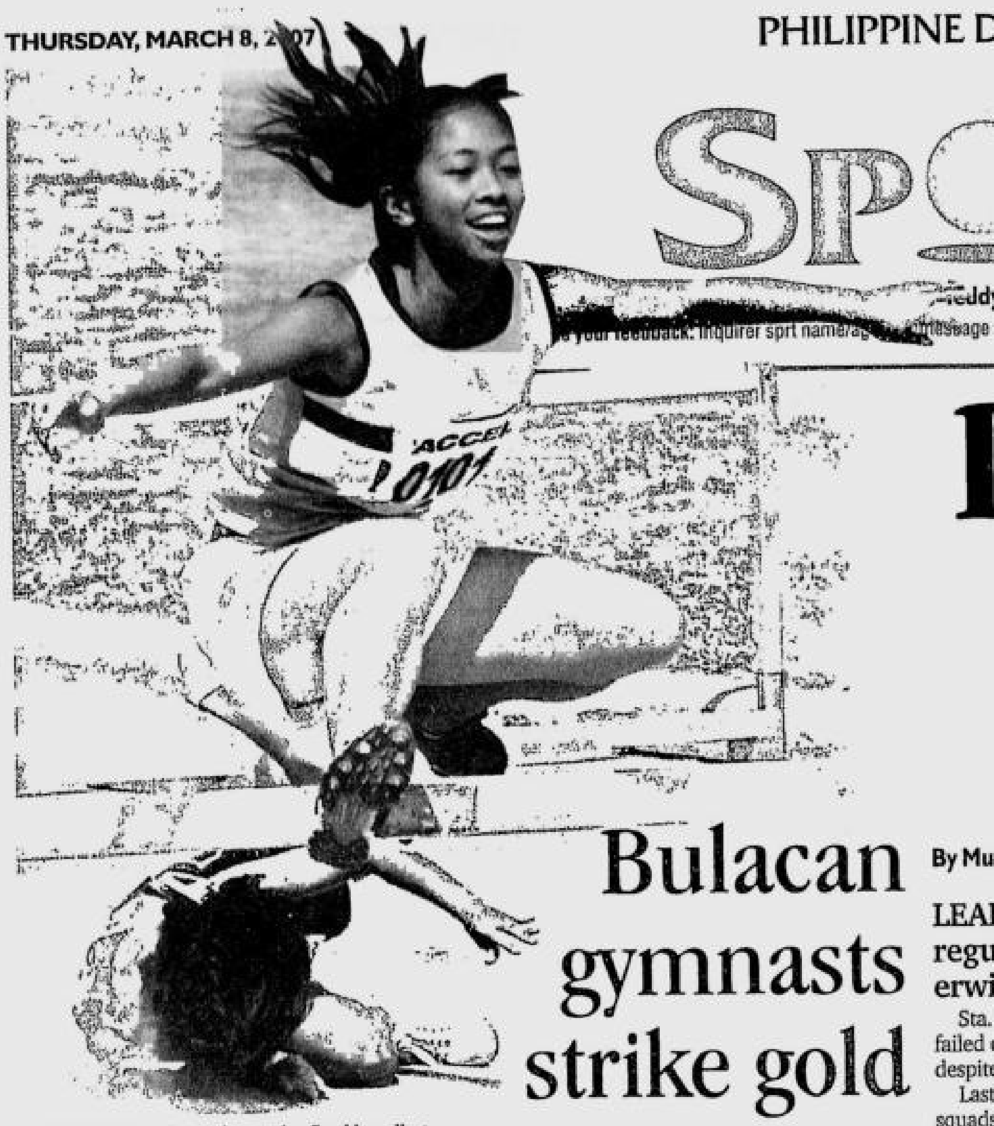

RONILYN Santiago clears the final hurdle to her gold medal bid while her closest rival crashes to the ground in the Philippine Olympic Festival. RYAN LIM

Bulacan gymnasts strike gold in Vigan

By June Navarro

VIGAN, ILOCOS SUR—BULACAN SCOOPED UP 10 gold medals in gymnastics to dislodge Pangasinan atop the leaderboard on the second day of competitions in the Philippine Olympic Festival here.

Marie Rose Mendoza became the first quadruple gold medalist after overwhelming the field in the ribbon, hoop, rope and individual all-round competitions of the girls' rhythmic gymnastics to lead Bulacan's assault of the medal standings.

A freshman from Lulumboy High School in Bocaue, Bulacan, Mendoza ran the floor with flair and coordination to get the nod of the judges for the victory that assured the 12-year-old lass a slot in the national championships in October.

"I really didn't expect to win," Mendoza said in Filipino. "I just tried to enjoy what I'm doing."

Mendoza picked up the sport three years ago and was a finalist in the Palarong Pambansa in Naga City last year.

Bulacan also dominated the men's artistic gymnastics after Rev Lictana topped the horse vault, floor exercise and individual overall for a triple-gold feat.

Lictana, who won a gold in the individual all-around during the Naga Palaro, is seeking a slot in the national team for the 2012 Olympics.

"I always dream of competing for the national team and I will do my best to accomplish that goal," said the 17-year-old Education freshman from Lourdes College in Angat, Bulacan.

Also fueling the success of the province in gymnastics were Regilyn Surio (girls' clubs), Romelyn Borja (girls' balance beam) and Nikki Ann Bertulfo (balance beam) as Bulacan compensated for its Day 1 frustration in athletics.

"I wasn't really surprised with the outcome because these kids have been training hard since they learned the sport," said Bulacan coach Noel Flores, whose gymnasts also hauled seven silver and five bronze medals.

Ilocos Norte was a gold short of seizing the overall title in the second day of competitions after grabbing nine golds, nine silvers and eight bronzes in gymnastics.

Albert Agaban won three gold medals in the boys' artistic gymnastics after impressing the crowd in the floor exercise, horse vault and individual all-around events.

Ilocos Norte also leaned on the gold-medal performances of Lyka Gazmena (ribbon), Princess Debrey Reyes (rope), and double gold-medal feats from Flora Mae Acoba (hoop and individual all-around) and Xariah Galaine Gapuzan (floor exercise and indv. all-around).

Opening-day leader Pangasinan dropped to third overall after grabbing a lone gold out of the 24 medals at stake in gymnastics courtesy of Jiamarie Kawachi in women's horse vault.

Despite of a mediocre finish in gymnastics, Pangasinan continued to rule the track and field events after Lany Cardona nailed her second gold medal in the 5,000-meter run that went along with victories in the boys' shotput and long jump.

Cardona again ran without her sneakers and clocked 21 minutes and eight seconds in the 5,000m run.

Pangasinan has a total haul of nine golds, three silvers and four bronzes after two days.

David lifts Air21 over Sta. Lucia

GAMES TOMORROW (Cuneta Astrodome)
4:35 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs. Purefoods
7:20 p.m.—Red Bull vs. San Miguel

By Musong R. Castillo

LEARNING TO SURVIVE THE SHAKEUPS ITS LINEUP regularly goes through—whether by design or otherwise—has taught Air21 to thrive on adversity.

Sta. Lucia, on the other hand, has failed constantly to play up to potential despite a solid lineup.

Last night was no different for both squads.

The Express held the Realtors to several dry spells in the fourth period to pound out a 101-94 victory and debut in the Fiesta Cup in style while spoiling Boyet Fernandez' first game as head coach for Sta. Lucia.

Gary David scored 25 points at the Araneta Coliseum, 12 in the final quarter as the Express held the Realtors to just five points in the last 5:24 to complete a rally from as many as 14 points down in the third.

Air21 joined opening day winners Coca-Cola and defending champion Red Bull for the early lead after also getting a respectable 13 points and 17 rebounds from Shawn Daniels and double digit scores from four other locals.

"The motivation for us is for those who are left to fight," Bo Perasol said, referring to a lineup that was depleted further after the National Team tapped Ranidel De Ocampo. Air21 also gave away Yancy de Ocampo before season's start and Ronald Tubid in the middle of the last tournament in lopsided deals.

In the second game, Alaska edged Talk 'N Text, 98-94, behind Willie Miller's 27 points and the 15 points and 15 boards of Sonny Thoss.

Rock Winston was not actually the gem that he was advertised at first, but the 6-foot-3 former Lamar University standout did show flashes of what to expect for the rest of the tournament.

After scoring just six points in the first half, Winston went on to finish with 18 points and 17 rebounds but failed to rescue the team when his help was needed the most.

Kenneth Duremdes knocked in back-to-back triples that capped a 9-0 run with 3:02 left in the third for a 71-57 lead for the Realtors. And it looked like it would be easy sailing from thereon only for their game to fall apart on both ends of the floor.

Arwind Santos, the second overall pick in the rookie draft, helped David in the scorching fourth quarter run, his two straight baskets from the inside in a 23-second span giving the Express a 94-92 lead to stay, 1:57 left.

David actually gave the Express their first taste of the lead, hitting a short jumper with 3:04 left for 90-89, before a Cesar Catli triple on the other end shoved the Realtors in front for the last time, 92-90.

The scores:

First Game

AIR21 101—David 25, Daniels 13, Santos 12, Arboleda 12, Dimaunahan 11, Telan 11, Canaleta 9, Se 8, Andaya 0, Bernardo 0, Torion 0.

STA. LUCIA 94—Winston 18, Duremdes 15, Espino 14, Aquino 11, Williams 10, Cabagnot 6, Calimag 6, Gonzales 5, Mendoza 4, Catli 3, Isip 2, Bughao 0, Omolon 0.

Quarters: 15-22, 36-46, 69-75, 101-94.

Second Game

ALASKA 98—Miller 27, Ellis 20, Thoss 15, Belasco 9, Cariaso 8, Ferriols 7, Singson 7, Hugnatan 3, Laure 2.

TALK 'N TEXT 94—Washington 21, Sullinger 20, Cardona 18, De Ocampo 16, Carey 8, Belano 5, Billones 4, Fran 2, Noble 0, Pablo 0.

Quarters: 21-21, 43-48, 72-72, 98-94

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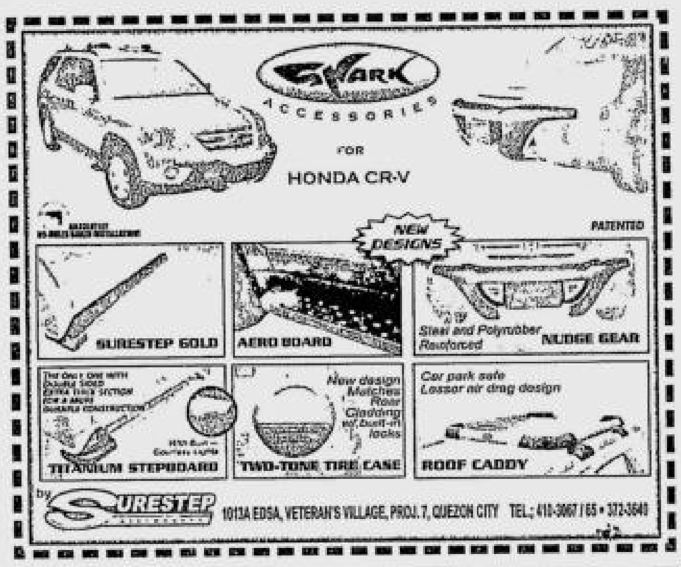
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POC chief not waving SEAG white flag yet

VIGAN, ILOCOS SUR—DEFENDING the Southeast Asian Games crown in Thailand this year could be an exercise in futility but the Philippine Olympic Committee is not waving the white flag yet.

"I will not commit anything (in the coming SEA Games) but neither am I going to concede the title to the Thais," said POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco.

With the trend of the host country capturing the overall plum continuing, Thailand is a cinch to unseat the Philippines in the biennial meet set Dec. 6-16.

The host country has always won the overall title since Malaysia topped the medal tally in 2001. Vietnam duplicated the feat in 2003 while the Philippines achieved a first-ever overall triumph two years ago.

"Aside from being the favorites, the Thais will celebrate the birthday of their king," said Cojuangco. "But who knows, we could still pull off some surprises during the games."

King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand will celebrate his 80th birthday on Dec. 5, a day before the SEAG fires off.

Signs of Thailand's bid to stamp its supremacy in the coming SEAG have already surfaced after the organizing committee removed events where the hosts would perform poorly.

Gone from the roster of disciplines in the Thailand joust are arnis, soft tennis, squash, chess and net ball, sports critical to the title defense of Team Philippines.

Events in traditional boat race and wushu, disciplines which the Philippines dominated in 2005, were significantly reduced during the SEAG Federation meeting last September. *June Navarro*

OVERCOMING BALDNESS

THINK-A-HEAD

No man likes being bald. He may try to ignore it, but deep inside, there's a nagging feeling that life has been unfair. Why me? Why have I gone bald when my friends haven't? Many men sadly accept looking older, being called "Baldie," feeling not so attractive to the opposite sex and putting up with the other handicaps baldness brings – both socially and career wise.

Other men refuse to accept baldness and look for a way out – this is when a wrong decision can lead to an even worse state of frustration and despair. Before you do anything about baldness, read the answers to these most asked questions.

Q. I DON'T LIKE BEING BALD – WHAT CAN I DO?
A. There are basically two ways to go. Some men opt for a surgical hair transplant. Others for the non-surgical alternative. When making the decision there's one essential rule: *THINK-A-HEAD!* - it's not only the immediate results that are so important, it's what your head is going to look like in a few years.

Q. OK, SO WHAT ABOUT SURGICAL TRANSPLANTS?
A. Some say transplants have come a long way since the early days, others say they haven't come far enough. Basically, the surgical process involves taking donor hair from elsewhere on the recipient's head and transplanting it to the balding areas.

Q. DOES TRANSPLANTED HAIR CONTINUE TO GROW?
A. If the surgery has been performed well, the transplanted hair will continue to grow, as it did before it was moved.

Q. CAN ANY BALD MAN HAVE A TRANSPLANT?
A. It's not really possible for a man with advanced baldness because he simply would not have sufficient donor hair to cover his large bald area. Transplants do not increase the number of hairs on a man's head, it's just a case of redistributing them. Transplants are excellent for filling in smaller areas or adding extra hair to thinning parts where there is not expected to be further hairloss.

Q. ARE THERE ANY PROBLEMS WITH TRANSPLANTS?
A. For men whose baldness will not advance further, there seems little downside to having a transplant.

Q. BUT WHAT HAPPENS IF I CONTINUE TO GO BALD?
A. For those whose hairloss continues to advance, there can be significant problems. While the transplanted hair will carry on growing, his other hair becomes thin in contrast as he progressively goes bald. He can have further transplants, but it's likely donor hair will become insufficient as the donor areas do not re-grow hair. The result might be patches of thicker-growing hair among thinning and sparser hair – and this won't take long to happen. The ensuing odd appearance of the man's head can cause him further embarrassment and stress. Speed of hairloss varies, but for most it takes just a few short years from thinning to full-blown baldness.

If a man suffers from Male Pattern Baldness, which usually strikes when he's in his early twenties or thirties, his hairloss will likely continue until he's bald. This is where the catchphrase *THINK-A-HEAD!* comes into play. Think what your head will look like in a few years after surgical transplanting – will you want to go out in public?

Q. I DON'T WANT THAT RISK, SO WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?
A. The non-surgical alternative is TCR or Transdermal Cosmetic Reconstruction. It's a super-fine synthetic skin with hair seen to be actually growing from it, which is then bonded to your scalp.

Q. IS TCR FOR ANYONE, NO MATTER HOW BALD HE MIGHT BE?
A. Yes, this advanced system is ideal for any state of hairloss and baldness, even for those with only a small amount of hair at the back and sides – the sort of baldness which is really not suitable for a transplant.

Q. HOW REAL IS TCR, WILL IT LOOK GENUINE?
A. TCR is real, natural hair, which looks and feels as if it's growing from your scalp. TCR cannot be distinguished from your own hair, even by touching. You are not "wearing" it, it's part of you.

Q. DOES TCR REQUIRE SPECIAL CARE?
A. To keep TCR perfect, you need only visits to the stylist every two or three weeks, just as any man does for the cutting and styling of his hair. As you get older, your TCR can be subtly aged and grayed, just as your full head of hair would have looked had you not lost any.

Q. IT SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE – WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?
A. There are no problems. You can do anything with TCR, it's your new full head of hair. It feels totally natural on your head – you're not aware of it. The only times you'll be reminded that you're no longer bald is when you look in the mirror and how others react to you – remember, you're going to look years younger!

Q. IS TCR AVAILABLE IN MANILA?
A. Yes, it's available in Manila at Svenson, the hair replacement specialists.

Q. IS TCR SUITABLE FOR ME?
A. To find out if your scalp condition and skin type are suitable for the TCR procedure, book a no-cost TCR fact-finding consultation by calling 892-4247.

ADVT.

President's Cup Regatta sails off

By Jasmine W. Payo

BORACAY—INTERNATIONAL champion yachts expected "champagne racing conditions" as the 15th President's Cup Regatta kicked off yesterday here in Aklan.

Defending champion Centennial of the Philippines and favored bets Quantum Racing of Australia and Hong Kong's Hi-Fidelity and Mandrake were among the 28 foreign and local yachts that sailed off for the inshore races around the pristine waters of Boracay and other neighboring islands.

"These are some of the top boats in Asia," said race committee chair George Hackett. "We're looking at 25 to 30 knots of breeze and that's what we call champagne racing conditions. It can't get any better."

Racers will be locating marked buoys to complete different courses in the four-day event.

"It's just a matter of who makes the least amount of mistakes," noted Hackett.

At presstime, racers in the IRC Class were contending in the windward and leeward races while the PY Class participants were competing in the long races.

"It's going to be a tough one," said Hackett. "If I were a betting man, I'm not going to bet right now. Quantum also has an impressive record in regattas throughout Asia and Australia so they're really going to be a force to reckon with. Other Hong Kong boats like Mandrake have always done well in Asian circuits, so any of these guys can win."

Hackett added that Centennial, a Sydney 46 owned and skippered by Ernesto Echauz, may have a tougher time in its titular defense after capturing the overall crown in Subic last year.

"(Philippine) boats like Karakoa and Centennial have always done well in Subic," said Hackett. "The conditions there have always suited their type of set up. But we're seeing bigger winds here, so other bigger boats from Hong Kong may be suited for this condition."

Echauz, though, remained confident even after Centennial finished only fifth in the preceding 5th e-Standard Insurance Manila to Boracay Race.

Centennial turned over the 200-nautical mile race title to Harry Taylor and DB Brizuela's Irresistible, a locally made boat that bagged its first major race victory.

"We've been racing together for quite some time," said Echauz. "We just have to be very well prepared and very well coordinated."

NEW LEAGUE: Harbour Centre-PBA Sophomores tackle Club 650-PBA Greats in the Burlington-PBA Corporate and Celebrity Cup last Sunday at the Araneta Coliseum.

Alcano gets into world 8-ball semis

REIGNING WORLD POOL champion Ronnie Alcano trounced overseas Filipino worker Elvis Calasang, 10-4, Wednesday night to barge into the semifinals of the third World 8-Ball Championship at the Al Bashton Hall in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates.

The 36-year-old Alcano surged to a 3-1 lead, allowed Calasang to slice it to 4-2 before pulling away for good, 7-3.

Alcano beat former World 9-Ball champion Thorsten Hohmann of Germany, 10-3, in the round-of-32 and Naif Al Jeweni Kingdom of South Africa, 10-3, in the round-of-16.

Calansang, a former snooker cue artist, won over fellow OFW Joyme Vicente, a coach of UAE, 10-9, in the round-of-32 and then trounced Hui Kai-hsia of Taiwan, 10-6, to advance to the quarterfinal round.

Joven Bustamante, another OFW, also entered the quarterfinal when he bested Goran Mladenovic of Serbia and Montenegro, 10-7, in the round-of-16.

Niels Feijen of the Netherlands outclassed fellow Dutch Nick Van Den Berg, 10-2, to forge a semis clash against Alcano.

At presstime, World Pool League titlist Dennis Orcollo is still battling Marcus Chamat of Sweden while Bustamante is tackling Thomas Engert of Germany. Chamat ousted Filipino Hall of Famer Efren "Bata" Reyes, 10-4. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

6TH LA UNION OPEN CHESS CUP

GOV. Victor Ortega and GM Eugene Torre make the ceremonial moves of the 6th La Union Open Chess Championship at the Diego Silang Hall, Provincial Capitol, City of San Fernando. Looking on are tournament director Joseph Dumuk, NCFP director Rocky Molintas, NCFP executive director Samuel Estimo, Gene Poliarco,IM Barlo Nadera and NM Emmanuel Senador.

Baguio bets shine in Corporate Cup

BAGUIO CITY—CITY OF BAGUIO COMbined for 145 points on Rudy Lockey's 52, Goody Ignacio's 49 and Romy Tio's 44 to surge on top of Group I after two days of the 19th Philippine Corporate Cup here.

Counting their opening round 158, the Baguio parbusters have a 303 total and a commanding 23-point lead over Camp John Hay Golf Club.

Sharing the limelight were Harvey Robles of Mikey's Bar and WPGTA's Seo Jeong Dae who shot holes-in-one.

Robles got his ace at the par three, 117-yard 13th hole from the white tee while playing with teammate Jeff Razon and Camp John Hay Development Co.'s Larry Tojino and Monet Garcia.

He used a Maxfli nine iron to hit a No. 2 Titleist Pro V-1 ball into the cup in one pop and won a Canon digital camera as special prize.

Seo gunned down his ace on the 153-yard 15th hole with a Nike nine iron and a Callaway No. 2 ball while playing with teammate Son Yong Kon and Titus Almendral and Aris Sunio of Texas 2. He won a Canon video camera.

Sportsman Cecil Hechanova launched the annual event at the Canlubang Golf and Country Club in 1989 to provide executive golfers their own team and individual championships. Camp John Hay is now the Philippine Corporate Cup's official home.

An international field of 300 players from the United States, South Korea and Indonesia as well as from Cebu, Davao, Zamboanga, Nueva Ecija and this city are competing in the 36-hole event spread over three days.

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Entries will be evaluated based on social impact, sustainability, fundability, absorptive capacity, integration of the social and financial missions and communication to stakeholders.

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Tiu shatters San Mig drag race record

ROSARIO, BATANGAS—JONATHAN Tiu of Team Ere posted a new record en route to ruling the kickoff of the 2007 San Mig Coffee Philippine Drag Racing Championship Series at the Batangas Racing Circuit Drag Strip recently.

Reigning champion Dave Jota failed to show up but an equally exciting encounter between Tiu and chief tuner Mato Tan occurred in this event sanctioned by the Automobile Association Philippines (AAP).

Tan broke Tiu's existing 10.962 seconds during the official practice when he posted 10.8 seconds and raised the bar higher to 10.726 seconds on his third practice run.

Tiu got back the record when he clocked 10.677 seconds on his last practice run.

JONATHAN Tiu flashes a thumbs up after winning the kickoff leg of the 2007 San Mig Coffee Philippine Drag Racing Championship Series.

Unfortunately, Tan was booted out early by When When Dagondon in the competition proper following a mistake in gear shift.

Tiu, on the other hand, pushed his Evo 5 a little more to set a new record time of 10.653 in booting out Sonny de Torre of Group N Racing Team in the semifinals of the premiere Quick 8 division.

In the finals Tiu was a bit slower with a time of 10.736 seconds, but it was enough to outlast Ryan Lee of Speedworks for the Quick 8 crown.

"It was a tough start, but luckily I was able to push the car a little more and set a new record time," said Tiu.

Winning the other divisions were privateer Sherwin Esguerra and Romeo Manuel Jr. of Pit 21.

Esguerra turned back Jeffrey Escueta of Big Bore Racing Team in the Sportsman Class clocking 16.288 seconds while Manuel registered 16.288 seconds to beat Theopilus Abeja in the Hotstreet division.

Rain showers prompted BRC Drag Race Director Fil Gulfin to postpone the semifinal round of the Pro Class.

Contact Rodini Rivera or Nelson Gayola at 817-2241, 729-5365 or fax 815-1241 for details.

Tagaytay-RP wins despite So's 1st loss

Standings after seven rounds:

22 points—Pavlodar (Kazakhstan); 19.5—Tagaytay (RP); 18.5—Saipa (Iran); 17—Shanghai (China); 16—Rahahan (Iran); 15—Tidewater (Iran); 14—Tehran (Iran), Lahore (Pakistan), Aleppo (Syria); 13—Dubai (UAE), Calicut (India), Sharjah (UAE), Damascus (Syria); 12.5—Amman (Jordan), Sulimania (Iraq); 12—Colombo (Sri Lanka); 9.5—Erbil (Iraq); 3.5—Jerusalem

TEHRAN, IRAN—DEFENDING champion Tagaytay-RP extracted a 3-1 win over 12th seed Calicut (India) in the seventh round of the 15th Asian Cities Chess Team Championships at the Eram Grand Hotel here late Tuesday.

GMs Mark Paragua and Rogelio Antonio Jr. and IM Oliver Dimakiling provided the victories for the second-seeded Filipinos, who still trail fourth-round victim Pavlodar (Kazakhstan) by 2.5 points with only two rounds left in this 18-team, 12-nation event.

Paragua snapped a two-game skid by humbling O.T. Anilkumar in 41 moves of an English Opening while Antonio made it two in a row by downing E.P. Nirmal in 27 moves of the Caro Kann. Dimakiling dumped Narayanan Lakshimi in 25 moves of the Marshall Opening.

But IM Wesley So, the Filipinos' leading scorer and a strong candidate for the individual gold medal on board three, went down in shock defeat to M.B. Muralidharan in 65 moves of the Sicilian.

The 13-year-old So, who won five of his first six assignments, had positional and material edge when he blundered and allowed the lower-rated Indian to promote his e-pawn to a second queen.

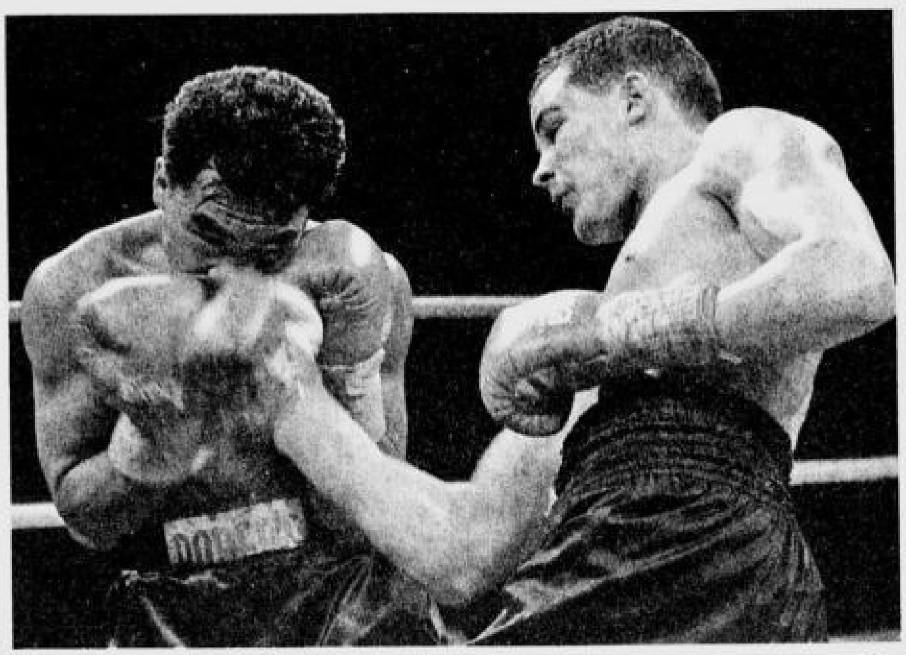
So's Qg4 – instead of Rd2 – suddenly turned the game around.

"Sayang but it's part of the game," said Tagaytay-RP team captain Willie Abalos. "Wesley is headed for another win when he blundered. But I'm sure he will learn from this experience and come out a better player."

Abalos, however, refuses to concede defeat to two-time champion Pavlodar.

"It's still anybody's contest," said Abalos in a report to Tagaytay Mayor Abraham "Bambol Tolentino and NCFP president and Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay.

Pavlodar, led by GMs Evgeny Vladimirov and Petr Kostenko, crushed Damascus (Syria), 3.5-.5 to pull away in the overall standings with 22 points.


FILIPINO WINNER: Australian Lance Gostello (right) lands an uppercut on Robert Oyan of the Philippines during an under card fight at the WBA middleweight world title event in Sydney, Australia, Wednesday,. Gostello won the bout on points. AP

RACING

BY TOP CHOICE

Race1—(Qrt/Tri)—Kaiphia (7), Hazit Coming (6), Joint Account (3), Lord Brian (5)
Race 2—(Qrt/Tri)—Please Do (4), Regal Boom (3), Irene's Fantasy (2), Earl Gray/Good Landing (5)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Green Gold (6), Just Relax (8), Little Bullet (4), Treasure Ack (3)
Race 4—(Qrt/Tri)—Lirao (1), Mindpower Miss (2), On The Fairway (4), Cebuana Spell (3)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Cara Dura (8), Ocean Deep (1), Vantage (7), Last Hazm (3)
Race 6—(Qrt/Tri)—Classic Appeal (2), Complexion (5), Cognac Monnet (6), San Diego Force (1)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Showgirl (8), Snake Mi Spaghetti (4), Italia (5), Minsk Quest (2), Alfa Romeo (3)
Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Bumblee Bee (3), Kim Possible (8), Suavetiger (10), Dagger Look (4), Spark (5), Prince Action (6)

NBC BACKER: The National Basketball Conference gets a big shot in the arm when Yahoo! Southeast Asia agreed to support the country's premier regional basketball league. Dennis Susay and regional marketing manager Dzurina Zainal give their thumbs-up to the sponsorship deal with NBC through Waffle Marketing president Auty Villarama.

SPORTSWATCH

Las Piñas Timbangan cockfest today

ANOTHER EDITION OF THE CROWD-DRAWING FASTEST WIN ONE-COCK TIMbangan takes place at Las Piñas Coliseum today with more than 70 fights on tap beginning at 11 a.m. Entries must be submitted from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m., according to LPC manager Alex Tobias. Today's host is the LPC Gaffers Association. The fastest win champion, who will receive P10,000, will be declared after every ten fights. Meanwhile, the Summer Bigtime 5- cock derby of Ricky Valencia starts at 3 p.m. on March 17. Call 873-1040 and 874-3910 or 0926-7450375 (Julius).

MBT Commissioner Nilo Fernandez and Jean Alabanza, sports director of Mighty Filter Corp., shake hands following the signing of agreement making Mighty Filter the sponsor of the MBT Women's Cup. With them are Denny Peralta, MBT director (left) and Dino Ponce Enrile.

Adidas KOTR goes Global

OVER 3,000 RUNNERS ARE EXPECTED when the 2007 Adidas King of the Road, the country's premiere 10K foot race, returns on Sunday at the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig City.

Expected to clash for the men's crown are veteran runners Reynaldo delos Reyes, Bernardo Desamito and Jujet de Asis of Philippine Army.

A wide open battle is expected in the distaff side sans Mercedita Manipol, the Queen of 10K runs, as she is not eligible to participate in the Metro Manila KOTR race having won the KOTR Baguio leg.

Manipol, together with Eduardo Buenavista and KOTR Davao leg winners Juniel Languido and Estella Mamac Diaz, will be brought to Manila in an all-expense paid trip to participate in the KOTR National Championship on June 17.

Up for grabs in the men's and women's 10K race are trophies, P10,000 cash and P10,000 worth of gift certificate from Adidas. Prizes will also be at stake for the age-group winners in the 10K run and the 3K side event.

All finishers will receive an Adidas sling bag according to Goody Custodio, Adidas Philippines Inc. Sports Marketing Manager.

Competition in the 3K run is for kids 6 to 9 and 10 to 13 years old. The top finisher will receive P2,000 worth of gift certificate.

Team competition is also at stake for groups who can submit 50 entries with the top 25 runners of each team scoring.

The Adidas KOTR starts on 28th Street in front of the Adidas Sports Kamp and will proceed to 32nd St. on the way to the Kalayaan flyover to Makati City using the Pasay City bound side of Gil Puyat Ave. Runners will make their turn around at the intersection of Gil Puyat Ave. and Ayala Ave. to return to the finish line on 4th Ave. Race time is 6 a.m.

Supporting organizers in this Sunday's Adidas KOTR are the PNP Taguig City and Makati City Police Station, Makati City TEG and Mapsa, Philippine National Red Cross, Philippine Center for Sports Medicine, Bonifacio Global City Security, and Spectrum Communications.

Orcollo, Yang Q & A

THEY ARE BOTH SOFT-SPOKEN AND DOWN-TO-EARTH, BUT DON'T BE DEceived. Filipino Dennis Orcollo and Taiwanese Yang Ching-shun will turn into fierce warriors when they collide in "The Golden Pool Classic presents: Orcollo vs Yang—it's all about the money…and more" on April 12 to 14 at the Gateway Mall in Cubao, Quezon City.

Though they have competed in so many international tournaments, it's ironic that Orcollo and Yang, both 28, have never met in a match.

Come game time, they'll know who's better as both aim to run away with the fat $10,000 purse and the unofficial tag of "money game king of the world."

The race-to-60 marathon match is being organized by Bugsy Promotions of Perry Mariano and the Rocketman Enterprises of Ramon Tuason. It is being supported by the Quezon City government headed by Mayor Sonny Belmonte and Councilor Ariel Inton.

Dennis Orcollo

Q: What is your opinion of Yang as a player?

A: Yang is good. In my opinion he's number one in Taiwan. When it come's to money game he's the Taiwanese' top bet.

Q: Who among the Filipinos do you think was the hardest to beat in money game?

A: When they are in good condition and hitting well, I think Antonio Gabica and Django Bustamante are hard to beat.

Q: No matter the outcome of this event, are you willing to have a rematch with Yang in Taiwan or maybe in another country?

A: Yes, I'm willing to play him anywhere. My manager (Perry Mariano) told me that the next edition might be winner-take-all and everybody is invited.

Q: When did you start playing pool?

A: I was around 12 years old.

Q: Who were your mentors when you were just starting?

A: Nobody, I learned by myself. I just studied the shots of other players and then mastered them.

Q: Who among Filipino players do you admire most?

A: There are many good players in the Philippines, almost equal. But I want Warren Kiamco to be on my side because he's a cool player.

YANG

ORCOLLO

Yang Ching-shun

Q: What is your opinion of Dennis as a player?

A: I know that he is one of the toughest player in the Philippines, among the top 3 in my opinion.

Q: Who among the Filipino players that you played in money games here do you think was the hardest to beat?

A: I have played money games with Bustamante and Alcano before. They are tough players, both are the hardest.

Q: No matter the outcome of this event, are you willing to have a rematch with Orcollo in Taiwan or maybe in another country?

A: I'll be more than happy to face Orcollo again. It doesn't matter where as long as Orcollo has a strong heart for a bigger prize money and I am ready for it.

Q: When did you start playing pool?

A: I started playing pool when I was in junior high school.

Q: Who were your mentors when you were just starting?

A: Hao Ping-chang.

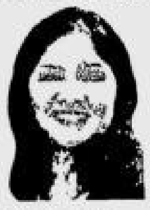
Q: Who among Taiwanese players you admire most?

A: Skill-wise, no one in particular. But in terms of style and attitude, Fong Pang-chao is the player I admire most. Whether he's winning or losing, he always plays smooth and steady. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

JUSTIN Chua (right) receives a token from Tony Fabico.

Chua best kept secret

IN HUDDLE


Beth Celis

THE GROUP BEHIND GAMEFACE.PH certainly deserves a pat on the back for its extensive talent-scouting efforts in high school and collegiate basketball.

This week, Gameface president/CEO Henry Abes allowed us to take a close look at rising young star Justin Chua whom he describes as "one of Pinoy Hoopdom's best kept secrets." Chua plays for the Chiang Kai Shek College Dragons, one of the member teams of the Tiong Lian Basketball League, which has produced the likes of Christian Luanzon (St. Stephen), and Eric Yao, Chris Tiu and Joseph Yeo (Xavier).

Averaging a triple-double in scoring, rebounds and blocks, Chua carried the Dragons to the championship, ending the academe's 12-year title drought.

* * *

"A junior high school student, the 6-foot-5, 215-lb star center is hard to miss once he enters the hardcourt. While he fits the bill of the typical teenager, once he steps onto the basketball court, he assumes a different persona - transforming into an imposing force. Unlike other boys his age, or even other players his size, Chua is highly mobile and athletic. There is a nimbleness that goes with his raw strength, making him a double handful on match-ups," wrote Henry.

"Chua led the Dragons of Coach Sonny Co to the Tiong Lian Season 31 High School Basketball title, dethroning the Xavier Golden Stallions of former UP varsity coach Lito Vergara via a two-game sweep. Don't let that fool you though. The Finals was anything but a cakewalk for the Dragons. They came back from a 48-25 deficit in Game 1 to steal the win, 86-78, behind Chua's triple-double stat line of 29 points, 19 boards and 10 blocks. In Game 2, Chua had 17 points, 13 boards and 10 blocks in a highly physical and emotional game that saw tempers flare even off the court."

* * *

Henry said Chua has a dream. "I want to play all three positions, play more at the perimeter." he quotes the player. At his size, he has always played the post positions of 4 and 5, but at the risk of incurring his coach's ire, he has been working on his perimeter skills like speed, mobility, dribbling and shooting.

"Good thing the three (point shot) he took during the series went in. We all know 6-foot-5 centers aren't supposed to be shooting from that far out. But then again Chua came from the same Bacolod school that produced PBA MVP James Yap and UAAP MVP Ken Bono, a pair of multi-skilled cagers that defy mere size," Henry said.

At only 15 years young, he has a lot of room for growth, both physically and psychologically. If he gets into one of the top colleges and receives good coaching, he will grow even more as a player, develop new skills, add new wrinkles, and maybe even invent new moves that will become his signature. He is slowly making it to the mainstream radar and college recruiters will surely be beating a path to his door soon.

Since the PBA is not interested in sending a team to the SEABA FIBA Asia Champions Cup qualifier, maybe the BAP-SBP selection committee composed of Lito Alvarez, Wilson Young, Christian Tan, JunJun Capistrano and chair Chino Trinidad should consider sending another squad instead.

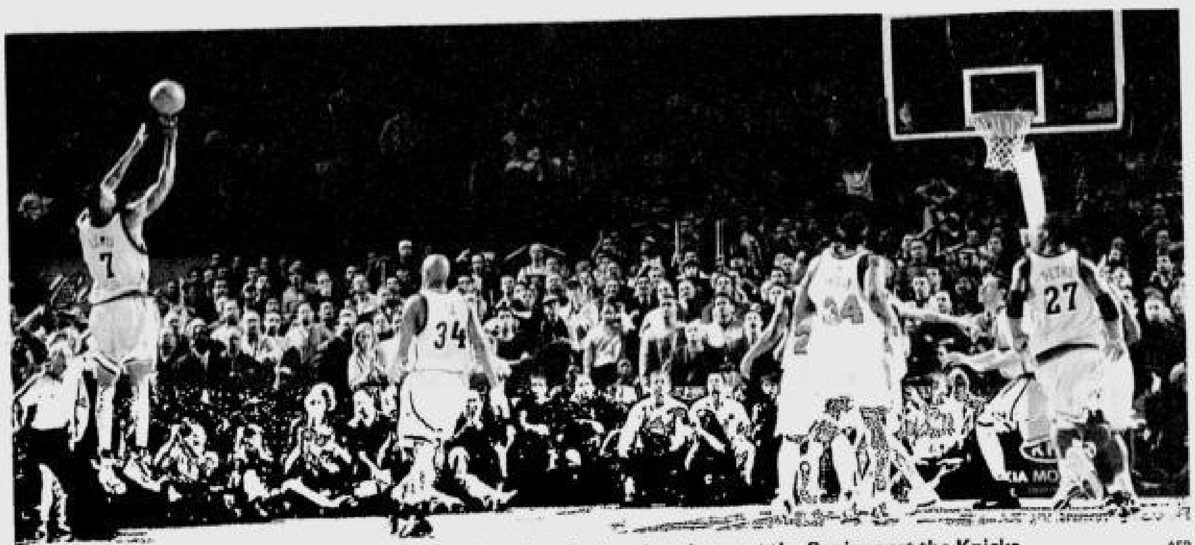
Like PBL back-to-back champion Harbour Centre. After all, owner Mikee Romero has offered his team for the SEAGames and the SEABA ABC Men's championship qualifier. Perhaps, like most of us, he didn't know about this SEABA Champions Cup qualifier which will be held in Jakarta, Indonesia, from April 9 to 14. Two years ago, the Champions Cup was held here in Manila. Qatar got the title The Philippine team coached by Chot Reyes finished 5th in a field of 9. This year's Champions Cup will be held in Iran.

* * *

HOOPVINE: Twice the presscon hosted by Jerry Codinera launching his candidacy as sectoral representative had to be postponed to fit into Manny Pacquiao's busy schedule. Pacman had promised to be the special guest who would raise Jerry's arm during the presscon. In spite of all the adjustments in sked, Pacquiao failed to make it and instead sent his brother Bobby and trusted lieutenant Jake Joson…Congratulations to La Salle Greenhills dribblers for romping off with a couple of championships: the NCR Palaro Elementary Division and the Paya Mini Midgets.

SPORTS

Mavs first in playoffs



RASHARD Lewis (left) puts up and eventually makes the winning shot that sent the Sonics past the Knicks. AFP

Wizards' Arenas ends shooting slump

DALLAS—THE DALLAS MAVERICKS BECAME THE first team to clinch a playoff berth this season after they stormed to a franchise-record 16th straight victory with a 102-89 decision over the New Jersey Nets on Tuesday.

Dallas pulled away from the Nets in the fourth quarter to extend their home winning streak to 23 games, also a franchise record, and improve their NBA-best record to 51-9.

Mavs coach Avery Johnson played down his team's winning run when talking to reporters after the game.

"Our fans are more excited about it than we are," Johnson said.

Jason Terry top-scored for the Mavericks with 24 points, leading seven Dallas players into double-digits and helped hold off a New Jersey rally that got the visitors to within a point with 1:23 left in the third quarter.

The Mavericks then scored the next nine points as the Nets missed nine straight shots over a six-minute span to fall off the pace.

Terry was an impressive 9-for-15 from the field and made three three-pointers as the Mavericks shot 49 percent and made 15 of their 16 attempts from the free-throw line.

Dirk Nowitzki had 22 points and 11 rebounds for the Mavericks, Erick Dampier pulled down 14 rebounds and scored 12 points.

Vince Carter scored 32 points and had eight assists and six rebounds for the Nets (28-33), who lost their third straight games to remain four games behind the Toronto Raptors in the Atlantic Division.

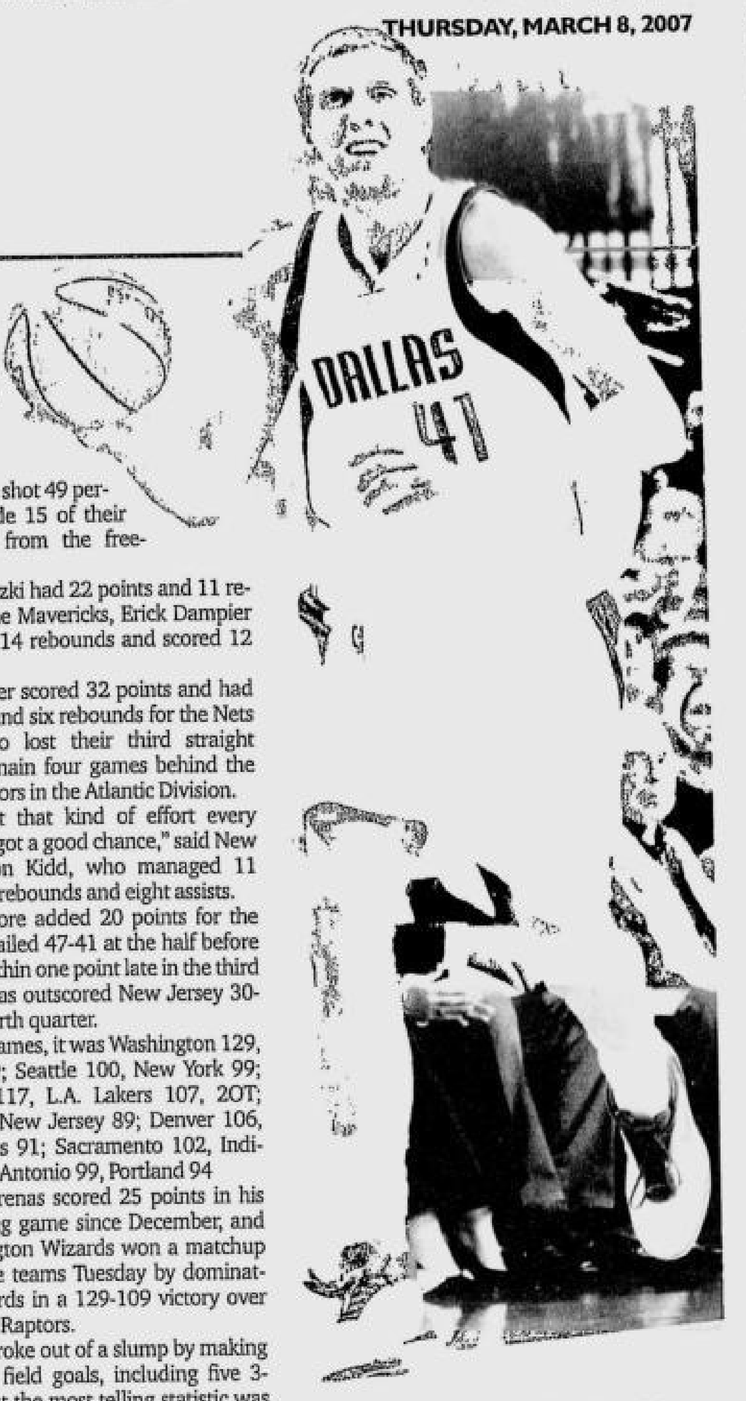
"If we get that kind of effort every night, we've got a good chance," said New Jersey's Jason Kidd, who managed 11 points, eight rebounds and eight assists.

Mikki Moore added 20 points for the Nets, who trailed 47-41 at the half before getting to within one point late in the third quarter. Dallas outscored New Jersey 30-21 in the fourth quarter.

In other games, it was Washington 129, Toronto 109; Seattle 100, New York 99; Minnesota 117, L.A. Lakers 107, 2OT; Dallas 102, New Jersey 89; Denver 106, New Orleans 91; Sacramento 102, Indiana 98; San Antonio 99, Portland 94

Gilbert Arenas scored 25 points in his best shooting game since December, and the Washington Wizards won a matchup of first-place teams Tuesday by dominating the boards in a 129-109 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Arenas broke out of a slump by making nine of 13 field goals, including five 3-pointers, but the most telling statistic was Washington's 33-10 advantage in second-chance points. *AP, Reuters*



DIRK Nowitzki and the Dallas Mavericks beat everyone else to the first playoff spot. AFP

Solaiman: 1962 Asiad memories still linger

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE MERE MENTION OF HER NAME easily fetches two tales tightly woven into RP's track and field lore.

But Mona Solaiman—having reigned at one point in her life as Asia's queen of sprints—made it very clear that she's only willing to talk about one of them.

And she made little use of subtlety to get her point across that the gender issue that belatedly thrust her into the limelight at the height of the Nancy Navalta controversy was taboo as an interview topic for her.

"I'd shoot anyone who dared to ask," Solaiman said when queried as to how she evaded the issue during her prime.

That gave the INQUIRER pretty much an idea as to how to survive the interview granted by the athletics Hall-of-Famer.

Solaiman, now 57, spoke freely, though, of the 1962 Asian Games, where she won three gold medals—a feat still considered as uncharted territory by today's local track stars.

"Modestly aside, I was the only one who achieved that feat in RP athletics history," said Solaiman in Filipino. "I will never forget that."

Maybe it is because she was—and still probably is—the only track and field practitioner who immersed herself in a unique training regimen, one that would have athletes marching on the streets and screaming abuse if their coaches subjected them to it.

"Things were a lot different back then," said Solaiman who swore that climbing ropes attached to a wall in what is now Ninoy Aquino Stadium was part of her cross-training.

To improve her speed, she also ran sprints in knee-deep portions of the Manila Bay and even on the mud tracks of the former San Lazaro Hippodrome—any surface, actually, as long as it would slow her down.

But the most difficult part of her regimen, according to her, was the "mini-*pison*" (steam-roller) session where a rolling steel weighing 50 kilograms is attached to her waist while doing the century dash.

"They don't do these kinds of things anymore," she said.

The prelude to her Asian Games feat actually came a full two years before, when she competed in the Rome Olympics and finished sixth in the century dash, the centerpiece event of athletics competitions.

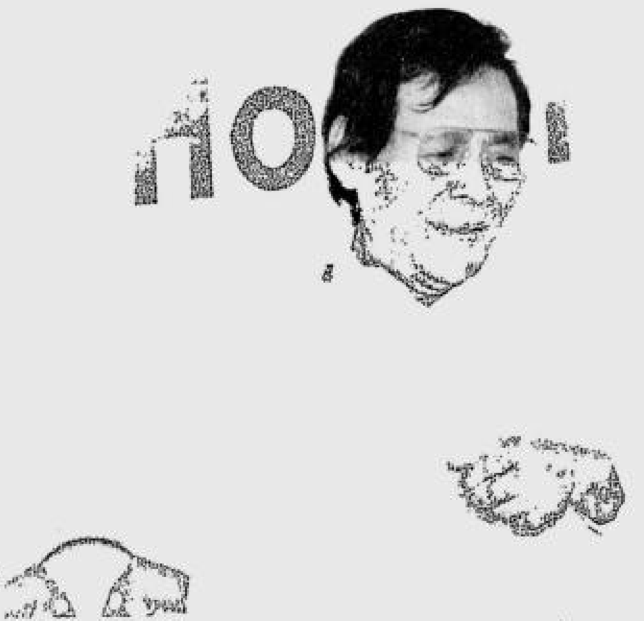
Psyched up by that feat, Solaiman flew to Jakarta, Indonesia, for the fourth Asiad and captured the gold medals in the 100m and 200m races before powering the 4X100m team to the top.

A native of Cotabato City, Solaiman defeated two Japanese runners in posting the sprint double, clocking winning times of 11.93 seconds and 24.63 seconds.

She also skippered the only RP relay team to have won an Asiad gold with a time of 48.67 seconds.

She then trained in Oregon University in 1964 to prepare for the Tokyo Olympics. Unfortunately, she was downed by the flu right upon arriving in Japan, managing to qualify for the sprints semifinals only to beg off before the finals fired off.

She then dabbled in show business, sharing silver screen space with the likes of Nida Blanca, Jun Aristorenas and Paquito Diaz in the early '70s.



SOLAIMAN: I'd shoot anyone who'd ask about my gender.

"My role would be that of a messenger who runs through areas that can't be reached by cars," recalled Solaiman.

As fast as she could go, however, time caught up with Mona Solaiman and its slow passage slowly chipped at the memories of her feat—and of the path she took to get there.

It also helped flush her down the ranks of the almost-forgotten that a certain Lydia de Vega—who captured the imagination of the sporting world with better sprint times and looks—came and drew the spotlight away from the fact that no Filipino track athlete has yet matched her three-gold romp in the Asian Games.

And it is a sad reminder of the way we treasure sports icons that the next time Solaiman's name cropped up was when she was made into an unwilling predecessor for the Navalta gender issue.

After all, like Navalta, Solaiman's looks, build and husky voice never failed to elicit questioning whispers in the past—none of which was ever proven the way Navalta's case was.

As gracious as she is about talking about her achievements, that is one area where she keeps a tight lid on things.

"It's all talk," said Solaiman, who currently works as a clerk in the Philippine Sports Commission's planning division and conducts provincial clinics every now and then—sans the steam-roller.

"It's all politics. Let's put those kind of issues away and we'll be doing Philippine track and field a big favor."

FG to seek Beijing's help for training of RP Olympians

By Marc Anthony Reyes

FIRST GENTLEMAN MIKE ARROYO WILL FLY to Beijing at the end of the month to seek the help of sports officials in training Filipino athletes preparing for the 2008 Olympics.

Arroyo will meet with Chinese sports minister Lu Ping to arrange training camps for RP athletes in diving, wushu, fencing and weightlifting.

The First Gentleman, who recently met with sports officials including Philippine Sports Commission chair Butch Ramirez, also singled out five sports as that with the brightest hopes for the gold medal out of the 14 priority disciplines whose athletes will receive overseas training.

He cited taekwondo, wushu, boxing, archery and diving as those that will lead the country's drive for its first Olympic gold medal in China.

The training of the athletes in these sports and other priority disciplines, Arroyo said, will be monitored by the FG Foundation and the sports godfathers from whom he will ask help.

"I understand that we need P250 million for the training of the athletes," said Arroyo. "We will talk to the godfathers."

The First Gentleman had been instrumental in helping sports get funding, including the Philippine Southeast Asian Games where he helped come up with P180 million for the training of national athletes.

"This is not just for the Filipino athletes, this is for the entire nation," said Arroyo. "Hong Kong already has a gold medal in the Olympics it's about time we won our own Olympic gold."

The PSC has picked up 50-55 athletes from 14 sports whose training will be financed heavily in a bid to finally capture the gold in Beijing.

Blood, brawl mark Champions League; Barcelona ousted

VALENCIA, SPAIN—THE MATCH ENDED with punches, kung-fu style kicks and a broken nose—and Valencia advancing to the quarterfinals of the Champions League.

The Spanish team advanced to the last eight on away goals after a 0-0 draw with Inter Milan on Tuesday in the second leg of the second round. The teams drew 2-2 in the first leg.

But some Valencia players may miss the next round because of the brawl, which left Inter midfielder. Nicolas Burdisso with a broken nose.

"It was ugly and sad that in this moment there are people who can't control themselves," Valencia striker David Villa said.

As the whistle blew, Burdisso attacked Valencia defender Carlos Marchena, sparking clashes between the two sets of players.

"Burdisso lost his temper and came rushing towards us," Marchena said.

Valencia substitute David Navarro entered the field and punched Burdisso. Several Inter players, including Maicon, then aimed kicks at Navarro as he fled the scene.

INTER Milan and Valencia players mix it up after the final whistle. AP

"I can't speak of things I didn't see because I was in the locker room when it happened," Valencia coach Quique Sanchez Flores said.

Blood was spilt in Lyon, France, where Francesco Totti and Mancini both scored Tuesday and AS Roma beat Lyon, 2-0, to also reach the quarterfinals.

"We won on every level," Roma's coach Luciano Spalletti said. "In our attitude, in defense, on the counterattack. We held the ball, we stopped their initiatives."

Several yellow cards were issued, the worst of which included one to Lyon's Cris after the defender committed subsequent fouls and another to Fred, whose elbow to Chivu's face which left the defender bleeding heavily from his nose.

Roma's cautions included cards for Simone Perrotta and David Pizarro, who will be suspended for the quarterfinals.

In Liverpool, England, Liverpool's second straight loss at home won't hurt nearly as bad as the first.

The five-time European champions advanced to the quarterfinals of the Champions League on away goals Tuesday despite losing to FC Barcelona 1-0 in the second leg of the second round.

The elimination means Barcelona is the latest team to fail to defend the European Cup in the Champions League era. Since it was renamed in 1992, no club has won the title twice in a row, and the last back-to-back winner of the European Cup was AC Milan in 1989-90.

"We've got great spirit, grit and determination," Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard said. "It gives us great confidence, going through against the best side in Europe over two legs."

In London, Chelsea reached the quarterfinals also after beating 2004 champion FC Porto, 2-1, to advance 3-2 on aggregate.

Michael Ballack scored with a volley in the 79th minute to complete a comeback and put Chelsea into the quarterfinals of Europe's most prestigious tournament.

Chelsea, which trails leader Manchester United by nine points in the Premier League, was down a goal early in the game before responding to manager Jose Mourinho's halftime speech.

"I just made them think a little bit," Mourinho said. "I told them, 'At the moment we are out of this competition. We either enjoy it or are scared of it.'

"I think at times it is possible to enjoy this kind of moment." *AP*

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Gov't starts streamlining bureaucracy

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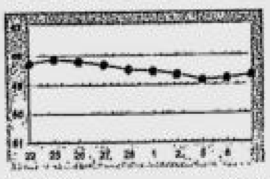

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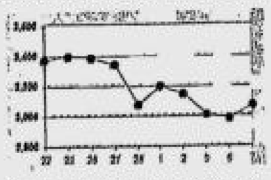
STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares rebound

SHARES REBOUNDED FROM STEEP LOSSES yesterday, inspired by a Wall Street rally overnight and recoveries in other Asian markets.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine

SHARES/ B2

12 agencies, offices to lay off 2,065 workers

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE INROADS IN STREAMlining its bureaucracy and corporate interests, with restructuring programs for 12 units now in the pipeline out of 112 targeted offices, agencies and government-owned and -controlled corporations.

Based on documents from the Department of Budget and Management, the restructuring programs of a dozen government entities had been approved, and these will result in the separation of 2,065 or 34.7 percent of employees and translate to P266 million in overhead savings for this year.

The DBM documents showed that 69 similar proposals to trim excess fat had been submitted and currently under evaluation, out of the targeted 112 state agencies, offices and GOCCs.

The 12 state entities whose streamlining had been approved by the national government are the Civil Service Commission, Office of the President, Office of the Vice President, Career Executive Service Board, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff, Philippine Racing Commission, Local Water Utilities Administration, National Home Mortgage Finance Corp., PDA (Partido Development Authority), Philippine Institute of Development Studies and Technology Resource and Livelihood Center.

The documents said the ongoing ra-

GOV'T/ B3

Forex reserves breach $24-B mark

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES' GROSS INTERnational reserves breached the $24-billion level for the first time in end-February, supported by new official development assistance loans from multilateral lenders and net foreign exchange purchases by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. yesterday reported that the end-February GIR climbed to $24.37 billion, $680 million higher than the end-January level of $23.69 billion.

The GIR, a key indicator of the ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy, consists of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, foreign investments and special drawing rights from the International Monetary Fund.

"The increase in reserves was traced to several factors, including the national government's deposit of the proceeds from its program loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, as well as the BSP's foreign exchange operations and income from investments abroad," Tetangco said.

The country's strong foreign reserve build-up was also supported by remittances from overseas Filipino workers, foreign direct investment and, in recent months, the strong influx of portfolio investments. These inflows had allowed the BSP to become a heavy buyer of dollars at the

FOREX/ B3

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▨ **Breaktime** Accounting sheep /B3

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PLDT to spend P8B this year for next-generation network

By Riza T. Olchondra

THIRTY-FIVE PERCENT OF Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.'s (PLDT) P22-billion capital expenditure for 2007 will go to next-generation network (NGN) expansion in response to growing demand for broadband and data services, company officials said.

To cope with increasing demand, the PLDT group initially rolled out 150,000 NGN lines last year and will install up to 700,000 new lines this year.

NGN refers to an all-IP (Internet Protocol) set-up that can transport all services (voice calls together with SMS, video, Internet and other non-voice services) in just one network instead of having separate lines for voice and data.

Napoleon Nazareno told reporters that the move to NGN was not the goal in itself but rather a key enabler for the group's transition from traditional voice offerings to other revenue streams.

"The PLDT group's move forward to next generation communication is starting to bear fruit. In 2006 we (saw) growth in our data, broadband and IP revenues, which offset the decline in our traditional fixed line voice services," he said.

"This change is starting to show results with the group's broadband revenues growing (by) 49 percent in 2006 to P5.2 billion as PLDT DSL and SmartBro subscribers more than doubled to 265,000."

The combined subscriber base for PLDT DSL and SmartBro for 2005 was 125,000, contributing P3.5 billion to 2005 revenues.

"We expect NGN to have stronger contributions in 2007 and the coming years," Nazareno said.

Citing third-party surveys and its own data, PLDT sees a boom in market potential for broadband and IP-based services.

PC penetration grew 58 percent year-on-year to about 1.4 million or 8 percent of total households in the country, according to third-party surveys.

Internet users, half of whom surf at Internet cafés, surged from 3.4 million in 2005 to nine million in 2006. Narrowband or dial-up Internet usage is also seen to be increasing in lower income households.

"The PLDT group is at a stage where it needs to strike a balance as it transitions from its existing businesses to what we call next generation communications. This transformation goes beyond upgrading our network to an all-IP next generation network. We will need to re-engineer our processes, integrate out platforms, transform our products and re-orient our people. In so doing, we will enable the PLDT group not only to cope with change but to benefit from it as well," Nazareno said.

PLDT chair Manuel V. Pangilinan added: "Beyond protecting our base business and developing new revenue streams, we are cognizant of the pivotal role we play in nation building. Our investment will equip our country with the requisite infrastructure to continue its economic progress and, at the same time, provide Filipinos everywhere with relevant, high-value and affordable services."

ICTSI eyes projects in Latin America, India

PORT OPERATOR INTERNAtional Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) wants to venture into Latin America and India to continue its aggressive international expansion, chair and president Enrique Razon Jr. said yesterday.

"We are continuously looking. We are looking India and Latin America," he said on the sidelines of ICTSI's special stockholders' meeting at the Makati Shangri-la.

Foreign operations accounted for 60 percent of the port operator's P1.8-billion net income for 2006, compared with 34 percent of the P1.34-bilion net profit in 2005.

The port operator last year added China to its growing roster of locations, which included Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, Madagascar, Manila, Poland and Syria.

Foreign acquisitions may be funded by ICTSI's $120-million standby credit with a consortium of 19 international banks led by ABN Amro Bank N.V.

The $120-million credit, which was higher than ICTSI's expected amount of $80 million, was signed last year by ICTSI's wholly owned subsidiary, ICTSI Capital BV.

The deal was arranged by ABN Amro with Calyon, HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, DBS Bank Ltd., KfW, and Sumitomo Mitsui Bank as joint coordinating arrangers.

The other lender banks who joined were Bank of China Ltd., Citigroup, Mizuho Corporate Bank, Societe Generale Corporate and Investment Banking, PT Bank Negara Indonesia (Persero) Tbk., DnB NOR Bank ASA, Mega International Commercial Bank Co. Ltd, Sumitomo Trust & Banking Co. Ltd., The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi, UFJ Ltd., Chinatrust (Philippines) Commercial Bank Corp., Moscow Narodny Bank Ltd., and the State Bank of India.

Riza T. Olchondra

Shares rebound

From page B1

Stock Exchange Index rose 89.99 points, or 3 percent, to 3,063.26, after losing 6.8 percent in the last three sessions.

"I think we'll still be positive during the next session, but I don't think it would be at the same degree that we experienced before. The market will be watchful of any corrections along the way," said BPI Securities assistant vice president Spencer Yap.

Yap said the sell-off last Wednesday, which pulled down the index 7.9 percent, or 263.84 points—the single biggest point-loss in one trading day—was a reality check for a market that had yet to undergo a significant correction after hitting 10-year highs. *AP*

Geograce sets rights offering

By Daxim L. Lucas

LISTED FIRM GEograce Resources Philippines Inc. plans to raise as much as P560 million through a stock rights offer to fund the firm's expansion in the mining business.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), the company said it would sell 560.47 million common shares at P1 each to shareholders on record as of a date yet to be determined by its board.

Under the proposed scheme, qualified investors will be allowed to buy one Geograce share for every 3.5 shares they own as of the cut-off date. The board has 15 days from the the time of approval of the rights offer to set the offer period.

The company informed the stock exchange that no underwriter would be hired for the stock rights offer. Instead, Angping & Associates, the stock brokerage firm owned by Geograce chair Jerry Angping, "commits to subscribe to all shares that remains unsubscribed at the end of the offer period."

Regulators have been closely monitoring Geograce's corporate developments and price performance on the stock market after its share price rose to as much as P2.02 from a one-year low of P0.065 a share on news that it is developing new nickel mining sites in Zambales and Palawan.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0690, Series of 2007 Promo Period: Feb 15 - Mar 31, 2007

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 7, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	9.9	11	9.9	10.75	651,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	54	54.5	53.5	54	3,254,100
Bank of the Phil. Islands	66	66	64.5	65	823,100
China Banking Corp.	850	850	825	840	8,900
Citystate Savings Bank	20	20	20	20	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.51	0.52	0.5	0.5	3,770,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	95	96	95	95	177,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	57.5	59	56.5	59	4,175,200
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	47	47	47	47	200
Philippine National Bank	46	47	46	47	42,700
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	39.5	40	38.5	38.5	412,700
Security Bank Corp.	73.5	77	73.5	76	73,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	59	59	58	58	15,500
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
ATR Kimeng Fin. Corp.	2.55	2.7	2.5	2.5	232,000
Bankard Inc.	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	50,000
Citiseconline.Com. Inc.	6	6.2	6	6	612,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1590	1610	1590	1610	370
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.82	1.9	1.82	1.84	406,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	670	705	670	700	40,560
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2040	2040	2040	2040	1,040
Ivantage Corp.	1.5	1.52	1.48	1.5	1,278,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	5.7	5.8	5.6	5.7	30,506,000
First Gen Corp.	49	51	49	50	1,029,900
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	69.5	69.5	68.5	69	320,900
Manila Electric Co. A	66	67.5	65	65	349,400
Manila Electric Co. B	67	68	65	66	2,343,900
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.2	9.3	9.1	9.2	5,328,000
Petron Corp.	4.35	4.4	4.25	4.3	7,711,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	40,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.45	3.5	66,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	24	26	24	26	175,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	48	48.5	47	47	109,800
Liberty Flour Mills Inc.	21	21	21	21	100,000
RFM Corp.	1.24	1.24	1.24	1.24	5,000
Roxas Holdings, Inc.	2.48	2.48	2.48	2.48	280,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	440,000
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64	62	62.5	54,100
San Miguel Corp. B	72.5	72.5	71	71.5	99,300
Alliance Tuna Int'l, Inc.	1.94	2.02	1.94	2	1,262,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18	18.25	17.75	18	2,642,300
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.52	1.54	1.48	1.5	30,063,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.55	4.55	4.4	4.4	1,096,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8.1	8.4	8.1	8.4	155,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	4,000
Republic Cement Corp.	5.3	5.4	5.3	5.3	202,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	4.75	4.75	4.7	4.7	3,374,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Active Alliance Inc.	3	3	3	3	20,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.33	0.34	21,160,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.011	109,100,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	5,500,000
Ayala Corp.	550	565	545	555	335,180
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.71	0.75	0.71	0.73	1,320,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.1	8.1	7.9	8	2,948,000
AJO.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	6,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.05	3.1	3	3.1	380,000
APC Group Inc.	0.34	0.35	0.33	0.33	6,070,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	165,900,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.46	1.52	1.44	1.5	18,174,000
PAL Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	34,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	5.5	6	4.9	4.9	2,461,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	11	11	11	11	1,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	3.25	3.35	3.15	3.15	48,757,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.4	6.5	6.2	6.2	1,966,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	5	5	4.85	4.9	2,970,000
House of Investments Inc.	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.42	396,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.25	12.5	12.25	12.5	317,400
Keppel Holdings	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	7,000
Keppel Holdings B	2	2	1.98	2	43,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	8.6	8.8	8.2	8.3	1,972,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.82	1.82	1.7	1.7	1,833,000
Pacifica	0.017	0.017	0.017	0.017	6,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.27	0.28	0.25	0.26	9,040,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	100,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	1,140,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.195	0.195	0.19	0.19	10,260,000
SM Investments Corp.	350	370	350	350	623,800
South China Resources Inc.	1.18	1.18	1.18	1.18	1,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.5	1.5	42,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	100,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.75	16.25	15.75	16	12,436,900
Belle Corp.	1.32	1.32	1.28	1.3	10,558,000
A. Brown Co. Inc.	1.22	1.24	1.22	1.22	302,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.45	810,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.55	3.75	3.55	3.75	236,000
C&P Homes Inc.	2.34	2.46	2.32	2.46	816,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	20,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.28	670,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	60,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.77	0.78	0.76	0.77	70,140,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	404,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0675	0.07	0.0675	0.07	7,800,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.54	123,563,000
Interport Res.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	61,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.011	46,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.49	0.49	0.48	0.48	3,390,000
Fil-Estate Land, Inc	0.89	0.89	0.85	0.85	8,220,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.85	2.95	2.8	2.8	41,160,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.4	42,000
MRC Allied Ind., Inc.	0.84	0.88	0.8	0.82	15,060,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	18.5	19	18.5	18.75	3,759,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.62	0.62	0.61	0.61	4,160,000
SM Development Corp.	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.85	4,708,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11.25	11.75	11.25	11.5	14,079,500
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	50,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.155	0.16	18,550,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	22.75	22.75	22.5	22.75	253,800
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	10,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.72	1.74	1.7	1.74	9,387,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1335	1370	1335	1370	179,430
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.8	6.9	6.6	6.7	4,321,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2450	2450	2355	2370	232,260
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.27	0.28	0.26	0.27	6,040,000
Diversified Fin. Network	4.5	4.8	4	4.3	179,000
Imperial Res.	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	500,000
Ionics Inc.	2.32	2.34	2.32	2.34	119,000
IPVG Corp.	5.7	5.8	5.3	5.4	953,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	2,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.065	0.065	0.0625	0.065	10,000,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.78	1.84	1.78	1.82	654,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.1	2.18	2.1	2.12	451,000
Philweb Corp.	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.044	220,500,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	55,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	28	28.5	27	28	39,723,900
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	764,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.75	3.2	2.75	3.15	14,290,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	200,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.87	0.92	0.87	0.92	840,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	923,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.65	2.7	2.5	2.55	1,310,000
Paxys Inc.	26	26	24.25	24.5	3,738,900
MINING					
Apex Mining Co., Inc. A	5.1	5.3	5.1	5.2	760,000
Apex Mining Co., Inc.B	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.2	932,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	167,300,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9	9	8.7	8.8	1,054,000
Benguet Corp. A	11.5	11.5	11	11	31,500
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.5	113,000
Geograce Res. Phil., Inc.	1.64	1.68	1.58	1.6	95,671,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	20,030,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.33	12,710,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.029	0.03	0.028	0.029	442,200,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.033	0.033	0.032	0.033	365,600,000
Omico Corp.	0.018	0.02	0.018	0.02	9,385,600,000
Philex Mining Corp.	3.95	4	3.9	3.95	6,801,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	17	17.5	17	17.25	259,900
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.7	0.71	0.69	0.69	1,040,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.12	1.18	1.12	1.14	6,964,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.31	0.32	0.3	0.3	3,780,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	47,800,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	6,000,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	282,300,000

CURRENCIES

March 7, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.761963	1.000000	48.7760
Japan	Yen	0.006542	0.008586	0.4188
United Kingdom	Pound	1.471122	1.930700	94.1718
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097505	0.127966	6.2417
Switzerland	Franc	0.622671	0.817194	39.8595
Canada	Dollar	0.647487	0.849762	41.4480
Singapore	Dollar	0.498536	0.654279	31.9131
Australia	Dollar	0.589298	0.773395	37.7231
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.021175	2.652590	129.3827
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.203255	0.266752	13.0111
Brunei	Dollar	0.496911	0.652146	31.8091
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000083	0.000109	0.0053
Thailand	Baht	0.023409	0.030722	1.4985
UAE	Dirham	0.207512	0.272339	13.2836
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.312400	64.0136
Korea	Won	0.000805	0.001056	0.0515
China	Yuan**	0.098426	0.129174	6.3006
Argentina	Peso	0.245636	0.322373	15.7241
Brazil	Real	0.358824	0.470921	22.9696
Denmark	Kroner	0.134264	0.176208	8.5947
India	Rupee	0.017243	0.022630	1.1038
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.216960	0.284738	13.8884
Mexico	New Peso	0.068356	0.089710	4.3757
New Zealand	Dollar	0.517990	0.679810	33.1584
Norway	Kroner	0.122723	0.161062	7.8560
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012559	0.016483	0.8040
South Africa	Rand	0.102753	0.134853	6.5776
Sweden	Kroner	0.108068	0.141828	6.9178
Syria	Pound	0.014678	0.019264	0.9396
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023116	0.030338	1.4798
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000355	0.000466	0.0227

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—March 6, 2007

* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen. ** Asian time closing rate as of March 6, 2007

US, RP out to maximize country's coal potential

Project to focus on coalbed methane, related resources

By Abigail L. Ho

LOTILLA

THE UNITED STATES AND Philippine governments yesterday signed a bilateral cooperation agreement that would allow the latter to maximize its coal resources.

Under the memorandum of understanding signed between the Philippines' Department of Energy and the US Geological Survey of the US Department of Interior, the two countries would conduct a joint assessment of the potential coalbed methane—estimated at 16.4 billion cubic meters—and related coal resources in the country.

Coalbed methane refers to the natural gas found in coal beds. It has a variety of uses, one of which is power generation.

The project, which will run from this year to 2009, involves the collection, analysis, compilation, synthesis, interpretation and publication of critical new data on coalbed methane and other coal resources.

It covers recoverable coal mine methane, as well as abandoned mine methane, reserves in various areas throughout the country.

In an interview with reporters following yesterday's signing, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said the study should allow local coal operating contractors to turn something that usually posed a danger to coal miners into something useful.

He explained that the exposure of methane to oxygen usually would result in mine explosions, which could be avoided if the methane could be captured first and then used for power generation or other purposes.

The Philippines has 19 coal districts that contain significant coal deposits.

The coal districts are found in Catanduanes, Danao in Cebu, Zamboanga Sibugay, Bukidnon, Maguindanao, Sarangani, Surigao del Sur, Batan Island, Masbate, Semirara, Mindoro, Quezon-Polilio, Davao, Negros, Sorsogon, Cagayan-Isabela, Quirino, Sultan Kudarat and Samar-Leyte.

Total coal resources in these areas are estimated at about 2.3 billion metric tons, while total coalbed methane potential is placed at about 16.4 billion cubic meters.

Based on initial indications, the country's coalbed methane reserves should be enough to fuel a 550-MW power plant.

The joint assessment would be of little or no cost to government, Energy Undersecretary Guillermo Balce said, as the private coal operating contractors would be the ones to spend for the study.

The private coal contractors would be the ones to benefit from this anyway, as the captured methane would provide them with a new revenue stream, Balce said.

Accounting sheep

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

CAVEAT EMPTOR!

This looks like another case of hotel rip-off. It involves a popular classy hotel and, according to our source, it even has an import-sounding name. It even enjoys a good reputation with the Makati business crowd.

But the apparent victim of the rip-off happens to be a well-to-do family, influential in many ways in big business, too.

From what I hear, the family held a banquet at the hotel a few months ago. Invited to the affair were people from high places.

Lo and behold, the hotel passed off as high-end seafood course, something that both the hosts and the guests could not even tell from "*galunggong*."

Thus, the hosts complained to the hotel's F&B manager, saying that what the hotel served during the affair was a poor substitute to the real thing.

The manager pooh-poohed the complaint.

Later, after many harsh words were exchanged by both sides, and with one side being the "customer," it was found out that the last time the hotel received delivery of the food item in question was some six months before the affair.

Well, to quash the complaint, the hotel had to argue that it served a six-month old supply of supposedly "fresh" food, right?

It seems that something fishy was going on in the hotel supply chain. Somebody must be making something on the side.

And so the hotel went for a compromise. The management offered to waive all charges for the banquet. You know, it's free!

Believing that there is no such thing as a free lunch, the rich family decided to donate the "payment" (supposedly for the hotel) to Gawad Kalinga instead.

Now don't force me to reveal the name of the hotel. Okay, I'll keep you posted as soon as I find out its name. Okay, I already know it, but I still can't say.

Meantime, just don't be caught sleeping in hotel...well, rip-offs.

* * *

IN AN INTERVIEW with Bloomberg yesterday, PLDT chair Manny Pangilinan said that PLDT is still thinking of buying a television station.

He did not elaborate.

Is he still interested in GMA-7, the same yet-to-go-public number one network in the country today, which Pangilinan almost bought some years back, although he found it too pricey?

Well, among the television networks in the country today, GMA-7 is still Pangilinan's logical choice. Unlike his other prospects (which should exclude ABS-CBN of course), only GMA-7 has a steady income stream.

If Pangilinan acquires the others, he will still have to turn them around. I don't think he, as boss of the Hong Kong-based First Pacific group, wants that. Or can afford it.

Look, PLDT will release some 70 percent of its profits last year as dividend payments. That's about P19 billion in total dividends.

Roughly P5 billion will go to First Pacific. This is still a lot of money even to a group like First Pacific.

* * *

MISUZU Audit, one of the biggest accounting firms in Japan, is closing down due to scandals.

If the name rings a bell, it's because the company was a spin-off from the Japanese arm of Pricewaterhouse, one of the international accounting firms known as "Big 4."

The US-based Price Waterhouse years ago has formed a tie-up with the Japanese accounting firm giant Misuzu, under the name ChuoAoyama PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Last year, the Japanese cosmetics maker Kanebo, a publicly listed company, was reported to have engaged in some window-dressing of its books. It was one of the ChuoAoyama PricewaterhouseCoopers clients.

The accounting firm then split into two, and one of them became Misuzu Audit.

Last December, according to the Japanese business daily Yomiuri, Misuzu was found to have overlooked false financial statements submitted by Nikko Cordial, another publicly listed company.

My info is that the old Pricewaterhouse-Misuzu (combined) had about 2,400 CPAs in its roster.

Misuzu is farming out its personnel, and thus, the servicing of its clients, to the other Tokyo-based firms of the Big 4, namely KPMG-Azsa, Ernst Young-Shin Nihon and Deloitte Touche-Tohmatsu.

It's definitely a big issue in the world of bookkeeping. You know, it's like one of the "Big 4" firms closing down our SGV here, after years of marriage that ended in a divorce. That big!

Well, it seems that CPAs are not meek as sheep after all.

* * *

BUT here in the Philippines, accounting firms are having a hard time keeping their CPAs, particularly the experienced ones up the rank of senior managers.

At that position, being a "partner" is just one step away. And yet Filipino CPAs are leaving the local accounting firms to become OFWs.

I am not kidding. Filipino CPAs are the next nurses and seamen. International accounting firms are hiring them for postings in London, and other hideaway places like the British Virgin Islands and the Bahamas.

There is no escaping it: The flight of experienced CPAs out of the country will affect the operations of local accounting firms.

One can only wonder if there's a Misuzu (or even an Arthur Andersen) in the offing here.

IN TODAY'S CAR OF THE YEAR SUPPLEMENT, THE ISUZU ALTERRA WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE LIST OF ENTRY-LEVEL SUV CONTENDERS. WE REGRET AND APOLOGIZE FOR THE OMISSION.

BOI approves perks for housing projects

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS has approved tax perks for four mass housing projects worth a total of P439.28 million amid efforts to address the housing backlog of 3.6 million units.

The four projects were those of Firm Builders Realty Development Corp. in Sibulan, Negros Oriental; Filinvest Land Inc. in Sto. Tomas, Batangas; Stateland Inc. in Cabuyao, Laguna; and Phinma Property Holdings Corp. in Novaliches, Quezon City.

Expected to provide a total of 1,145 new low-cost housing units, the four projects are also expected to create 1,006 new jobs during construction.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila, who is also BOI chair, said to provide affordable housing to less affluent sector of society was among the priority programs of the government.

Real estate developers are encouraged to go into mass housing projects with the promise of incentives.

These include a tax holiday of up to four years, duty-free importation of capital goods and other fiscal and non-fiscal perks.

Mass housing is one of the preferred investments covered in the 2006 Investment Priorities Plan.

Similar projects that have been registered with the BOI include those of CERES Homes Inc., DMC Urban Property Developers Inc. and LLSP Development Corp.

Further, the BOI cited a study made by the Center for Research and Communication (now known as University of Asia and the Pacific), which showed that a mass housing project has a multiplier effect of 16.6.

This means that for every peso invested in a housing project, P16.60 worth of investments in related industries sectors are generated.

BOI also cited Subdivision and Housing Developers Association, which claims the same formula was being used by the Housing Development Corporation, Housing Land Utilization and Regulatory Board (HLURB) and the National Economic Development Authority.

Sony expects revenue to reach P4.4B

SONY PHILIPPINES INC. YESTERDAY launched its year-opening salvo of products as it expects sales this fiscal year "to grow in double digits."

Hiroaki Kobayashi, SPI president and managing director, said there were still three weeks to go before the firm's fiscal year ends this month, but he said revenues were projected to reach P4.4 billion.

Kobayashi said big-screen, high-definition television sets remained Sony's growth driver, especially with the "dramatic increase" in the turnover of sets sized 40 inches and bigger.

"Sony owns the dominant share in the audio-visual segment and we attribute this to the market's positive response to high definition technology," he said.

"Ever since we introduced HD in the Philippines, Sony has become the most trusted brand in HD products and dominated the (market)," he added.

Further, Kobayashi said the firm wanted to see greater improvement in sales of handheld video cameras.

Yesterday, Sony introduced new varieties of HD Handycam, HD Cyber-shot and Bravia TV sets, offering the "total solution for HD enthusiasts: snap HD, shoot HD, view HD and print HD."

Also yesterday, SPI affiliate Sony Ericsson Mobile Communications introduced a new line of Walkman phones in a bid to widen the product line's market appeal, especially among phone users who are music enthusiasts.

Ronnel W. Domingo

Gov't starts streamlining bureaucracy

From page B1

tionalization program was "function-based" in order to improve the viability of these offices, and would ensure "reasonable" separation incentives for affected employees.

In line with the streamlining program, the DBM is supporting the passage of the Omnibus Reengineering Bill, which will, among others, grant authority to the President to review, approve and implement reengineering plans for specific agencies or sectors.

The proposed law likewise seeks to map out benefit packages with incentives and skills development assistance for personnel who may be affected by the streamlining effort.

A consolidated bill (House bills 193 and 1532) on government reengineering has been approved by the House committee on government reorganization and pending in the committee on appropriations.

Complementing these efforts is the implementation of procurement reforms, which aim to streamline and ensure transparency as well as competitiveness in the procurement process through better monitoring systems and professionalized procurement offices.

The DBM reported that 83.9 percent of national government agencies, 92.3 percent of state universities and colleges, 51.1 percent of GOCCs and 5.5 percent of local government units were now actively reforming their procurement systems, resulting in estimated savings of P414 million.

Forex reserves breach $24-B mark

From page B1

Philippine Dealing System during the period, currency traders said.

The GIR growth was even tempered by payments of maturing foreign exchange obligations by both the national government and the BSP.

"In terms of reserve adequacy, the end-February 2007 GIR level could cover about 4.7 months' worth of imports of goods and payments of services and income. This level is also equivalent to 4.3 times the country's short-term external debt based on original maturity and 2.5 times based on residual maturity," Tetangco said.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity refers to outstanding external debt with original maturity of one year or less, plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans falling due within the next 12 months.

Meanwhile, the net international reserves (NIR), which factors in the revaluation of reserve assets and reserve-related liabilities, likewise rose to $24.36 billion from the end-January level of $23.68 billion. NIR refers to the difference between the BSP's GIR and total short-term liabilities.

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WESTERN GRAND CENTRAL CO. Pasay Road Store 1028 Aranaiz Ave. Cor. Ponce St. Makati City
MICRONICS MARKETING PEREZ BLVD., Dagupan City Tel No. (075) 522-1688
MAITILINK + SYSTEMS, INC. Unit 401 UNLAD Condo cor Gen. Malvar St. Taft Ave., Malate Manila Tel 526-2120 to 22 Fax 526-6966

BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS
Makati City, Metro Manila

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS
March 29, 2007

To The Stockholders:

Pursuant to Article IV of the Amended By-Laws of the Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of BPI will be held at the Grand Ballroom, Hotel InterContinental, Makati City, Metro Manila, on March 29, 2007, Thursday at 9:00 A.M., for the transaction of the following business:

1. Calling of Meeting to Order.
2. Certification of Notice.
3. Determination and Declaration of Quorum.
4. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Stockholders on April 6, 2006.
5. Reading of Annual Report and approval of the Bank's Statement of Condition as of December 31, 2006 incorporated in the Annual Report.
6. Approval and Confirmation of all Acts during the past year of the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and all other Board and Management Committees and Officers of BPI.
7. Election of 15 Members of the Board of Directors.
8. Election of External Auditors and Fixing their Remuneration.
9. Directors' Bonus.
10. Other Matters.

In accordance with Article XII of the said By-Laws, the Stock and Transfer Book of BPI will be closed from February 27, 2007 to March 29, 2007. Only Stockholders of record as of February 27, 2007 will be entitled to notice and to vote at the said meeting.

If it will be inconvenient for you to attend the meeting, you may at your option, appoint another person to represent you thereat by means of a proxy, which should be submitted to the Office of the Corporate Secretary of BPI, 19th Floor, BPI Building, Ayala Avenue corner Paseo de Roxas, Makati City, Metro Manila, not later than 5:00 P.M. of March 19, 2007. Validation of proxies shall be held at the same office on March 22, 2007 at 4:00 P.M.

When signing as attorney-in-fact, executor, administrator, guardian, or in any other representative capacity, please give full title and file papers showing your authority.

FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

(Sgd.) CARLOS B. AQUINO
Vice-President &
Corporate Secretary

Smart Buddy Party Central Day

GEAR UP FOR THE BIGGEST, MOST EXCITING, all-day bash for teens and barkadas as Smart Communications Inc (Smart) kicks off the party season with Smart Buddy Party Central on March 10 at the Araneta Center.

Over a hundred booths at the Araneta Green Gate parking lot will offer freebies, online gaming, henna and glitter tattoos, and arcade games. The whole gang can also take part in a variety of games, trivia contests, and raffle draws for a chance to win cool and amazing prizes. Sing your heart out in a mini-competition, tackle daring challenges, or be the fastest to answer trivia questions. If you're game, you just might take home a brand-new mobile phone with a Smart Buddy SIM.

Hot young actor Dennis Trillo, a certified Smart Buddy, will drop in at the Smart Buddy Party Central along with other surprise celebrities.

Towards the evening, Smart Buddy treats one and all to a gigantic concert at the Araneta Coliseum where Buddies can whoop it up with their barkada and sing along to the hit songs from bands-of-the-moment Sandwich, 6Cyclemind, Calla Lily, Hale, Sugarfree, Itchyworms, and Shamrock.

Smart Buddy Party Central is also an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of all the students that have partnered with Smart through the pioneering Smart Buddy Business Links program, where students are trained by Smart sales people to become dealers and retailers of Smart Buddy SIM cards and e-load.

"While Smart keeps churning out cutting-edge services and innovative features to entice new subscribers, we also continuously look for ways to reward and shower with surprises all the loyal Smart Buddy subscribers," says Danilo Mojica, Smart wireless consumer division head.

All Smart Buddy subscribers need only to load at least 60 pesos at the event itself to get a Partycket and join the daytime activities at the Araneta Green Gate parking lot. To get a ticket to the big concert at the Araneta Coliseum in the evening, simply avail of any three Smart Buddy services on-site, such as LahatTxt 35, MMS wallpapers, or ringtones and logos.

Others may get a brand-new, fully-loaded Smart Buddy SIM card from the nearest Smart Wireless Center for only 65 pesos, grab the free Partycket that comes with it, and join the activities at the Araneta Green Gate parking lot. To get a ticket to the big concert at the Araneta Coliseum in the evening, simply load at least 30 pesos at the event itself. Those who will come in groups may get the Smart Buddy Barkada Pack (three Smart Buddy SIM packs for only 150 pesos) right at the event, load P30 each, and party all day at the Araneta Green Gate parking lot all the way to the Araneta Coliseum concert in the evening!

Mark Andrew I. Golez
One Million Pesos
BancNet

BANCNET PROMO WINNER

Metrobank Laguna Bel-Air branch client Mark Andrew Golez (center) receives a check for P1,000,000 for winning BancNet's Pay Bills, Pay Back promotion. The check was presented by (from left) Metrobank assistant vice president Aristeo Maralit, Metrobank executive vice president Fabian Dee, Metrobank Laguna Bel-Air branch head Stella Mercado, BancNet chair Angelito Villanueva, BancNet product manager Ma. Cristina Cuevas, and Metrobank first vice president Reynante Banico.

ProductFILES

1st direct-to-garment digital printer

DTG PHILIPPINES, AN EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTOR OF Impression Technology Australia for its DTG digital inkjet printer, introduces a revolutionary way of garment decoration through direct-to-garment digital printing. With the advent of this digital technology, 'what you can print on paper, now you can print directly on garments' without the hassle of traditional screen printing. Unlike screen printing, DTG digital printers need no set-up, no messy inks, no screens and no special skills. Now, you can offer any lines of garments with full color prints, customize print designs and with no minimum orders. For video presentation of DTG Kiosk model, visit the website www.dtgphils.com and for product or print service inquiry e-mail inquiry@dtgphils.com or engle@dtgphils.com or call the office at (632)497-5473.

Charantia maker backs traditional medicine law

reinforces SUGAR-FREE diet
Charantia
AMPALAYA FOOD SUPPLEMENT

HERBCARE CORP, MAKER OF CHARANTIA AMPALAYA Food Supplement, supports the full implementation of the Traditional and Alternative Medicine Act of 1997 (Tama). A brainchild of Sen. Juan Flavier and enacted ten years ago by President Fidel Ramos, Tama makes it a government interest to develop herbal medicines to bring down health care costs in the country. The law hopes to tap the country's rich reservoir of natural and herbal resources, one of the world's best. Among these plants, Ampalaya is the only one recommended for diabetes. Furthermore, it is the most scientifically studied plant worldwide. The Philippines' first Ampalaya product, Charantia quickly earned the trust of diabetics and government doctors. Through blood sugar tests, these doctors have actually measured how adding Charantia to the diabetic regimen can help their patients achieve better blood sugar health.

Vitarich supports agriculture growth for 2007

VITARICH, A LEADER IN FEEDS AND livestock, will intensify research and development in aqua feeds production and boost marketing efforts to support the expected growth in agriculture for 2007 as predicted by the Department of Agriculture.

Vitarich chair and president Rogelio Sarmiento said the company develops its own aqua feeds and keeps itself up-to-date with the latest technological advances in aqua feeds production from abroad.

"We have an R&D program that encourages innovation in the development of aqua feeds. We make sure that each incremental innovation we develop and discover goes into the feeds that we produce," said Sarmiento.

Vitarich aims to pass on the benefits of R&D to the local fish farmers through its various high-quality feeds developed specifically for different kinds of fish. Fish farmers can then maximize the use of their feeds and achieve a higher level of cost efficiency.

"We plan to reach out to more fish farmers to educate them about the latest developments in the aquaculture industry, particularly about feed formulations that can help them improve their yields. In turn, we also learn about their needs and concerns so we can continuously improve our products," Sarmiento said.

Vitarich has an R&D facility in Marilao, Bulacan, where new feed formulations are developed and tested. The all-natural aquafeeds developed in the facility are antibiotics-free, ensuring optimal growth of fish that are safe and healthy for human consumption.

Sarmiento explained that R&D is very important in aqua feeds production and that continuous innovation is necessary to improve harvests and meet the growing demands here and abroad.

"Meeting the demands for exports can only be met if we produce the desired quantities and the high quality required by foreign buyers. Of course, price also matters. With the right technologies and R&D into feeds production, our fish farmers can achieve the desired level of cost-efficiency to make them globally competitive," explained Sarmiento.

"High-quality feeds can help fish farmers achieve better yields. The DA recently reported that the fisheries sector achieved the highest growth in agriculture. Our fish farmers need all the tools they can get in order to contribute even more to this growth," he said.

In 2006, the fisheries sector achieved a high 6.31-percent growth with a gross value of P163.4 billion, accounting for nearly a fourth of the total agricultural output at 24.92 percent.

"The aquaculture industry weathered several strong typhoons last year. Since it represents a very important component of agricultural output, it is vital that we support our fish farmers," said Sarmiento.

At present, Vitarich has feeds distribution all over the country. It has also participated in festivals to showcase its aqua feed formulations and assist fish farmers with their business concerns.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
M-PHARMA WING CORP. 1547 M. Adriatico St., Brgy. 669 Zone 072, Ermita, Manila	Jin Sun Ko (w/o Jung)	Assistant Manager
YOUNG GALAXY RESIDENCE INN & RESTAURANT, INC. 558 Gen. Malvar St., Brgy. 698 Zone 076, Malate, Manila	Worl Ran Lee	Assistant Manager
CHAE YOGA MEDITATION SERVICES INC. Unit 1204, City & Land Mega Plaza, ADB Ave., Ortigas Ctr., San Antonio Pasig City	Mi Kyoung Kim	Yoga Instructor
MANDARIN ORIENTAL MANILA Makati Ave., 1226 Makati City	Mohd Aizar Bin Othman	SPA Director
ICT MARKETING SERVICES, INC. 19/F RCBC Plaza Tower 2, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Jeffrey Lynn Ivie	Senior Operations Manager
ASIANA AIRLINES, INC. 6/F The Salcedo Towers, 169 H.V. dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Tae June Park	Cargo Manager
DONG WON INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANCY CORP. Unit 10G Legaspi Tower, 300 Roxas Blvd., Malate, Manila	Dae Yong Kim	Consultant Head
MTM ENGLISH.COM PHILS., INC. U-2606 Prestige Tower, Emerald Ave., Pasig City	Min Ja Lee (w/o Yang)	Operation Manager
THE MANILA TIMES PUBLISHING CORP. 371 A. Bonifacio Drive, Port Area, Manila	Choong Ho Lee	Columnist
PHONENGLISH INC. 35 Sta. Maria St., Brgy. Kapitolyo, Pasig City	In Mu Hur	General Manager
ICT MARKETING SERVICES INC. 19/F RCBC Plaza Tower 2, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Norman Ernest Ott	Consultant
RAGA ONE2ONE CORP. Unit 504 Alpap II Bldg., Trade St. cor. Investment Drive, Madrigal Bus. Park, Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Su Im Choi	Operations Manager
ART-FRIEND TRADING CORP. Unit 708 VM Tower 727 Roxas Blvd., Parañaque City	Cheri Soo Shim	Operations Manager
IF SYSFUR INC. 2/F, 109 Neptune St., Bel-Air, Makati City	Kyong Kyu Oh	Operations Manager

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

The DOLE conducts free seminar on Labor-Human Relations and Productivity. For more information, please call 339-2013 & 303-5920.

(PDI March 8, 2007)

BITS Clips

Trip out with Cloud 9

CLOUD 9, THE FAMOUS CHOCOLATE, CARAMEL, nougat and nut snack that brings delicious fun now brings you a different kind of trip with its Trip, Trip Lang promo. The all-time feel-good chocolate bar that keeps giving you a positive vibe is letting you and your barkada in on a chance to go on an all-expense paid summer trip to Boracay. This includes round-trip tickets care of Cebu Pacific, accommodations and airport to hotel transfers for a group of four. All you have to do is share how you turned your embarrassing moments into positive, fun experiences. You may enter your stories at Cloud 9's Trip Trip Lang photo wall booths at various malls or visit the Cloud 9 website at www.universalrobina.com. The promo runs until March 16. Relive those fun and uplifting moments and win a great summer trip with Cloud 9 today!

Grepalife intent on securing top 5 spot in industry

BUOYED BY A ROBUST NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM, Grepalife has declared its intention to secure the no. 5 spot in the life insurance industry rankings within the next three years. This goal became the rallying cry of the Grepalife marketing and sales teams during the grand sales kick off the company recently conducted at the Grand Ballroom of Dusit Hotel in Makati City. Grepalife president and CEO Victor P. Quisumbing expressed his delight over the enthusiastic reception by the attendees. "Our entire management and staff is now fully determined, more committed and at one with the vision of making Grepalife a major industry player by 2010," he said. In addition, Grepalife makes a breakthrough in the insurance industry as the company is set to launch its innovative Insurance Calculator in the first quarter of the year.

Creative genius to visit Manila

THE WORLD'S TOP GURU ON MIND POWER AND creativity, Tony Buzan, is coming to Manila on March 26 to 27, for the Philippines' first Mega Guru Event of the year, "Unleash The Genius Of Creativity & Innovation For A Competitive Edge" at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. The owner of the world's highest creativity IQ, Tony Buzan is the originator of Mind Maps, a thinking tool described as "The Swiss Army Knife of the Brain" which is now used by over 250 million people worldwide, and the concept of Mental Literacy. In the 2-day transformational workshop, he will impart the secrets of using mind power to unleash fluency, flexibility and originality of thought that enables infinite creativity and innovation in work and life. The workshop is a must-attend for professionals who are required to create, innovate and solve problems as well as those who wish to unleash their genius of creativity and innovation to reach greater heights of success. For more information and registration, call ITD Consulting at 887-7428 or e-mail itdmanila@itd.com.my or visit www.itd.com.my.

PPSTA-MARBS reunion

ATTENTION PPSTA-MARBS (ERMITA CTR) FORmer employees, you will have a reunion on Saturday, March 17, come and join the celebration. For inquiries call: Beng - 413-1659; Elvie - 251-9247; Sol - 879-3757; Tess Millar - 806-704.

CBC Batch '82 Silver Jubilee

PASIG CITY'S COLEGIO DEL BUEN CONSEJO (CBC) Batch '82 will be holding its Silver Jubilee and Grand Batch Reunion on July 28, at Tektite Tower Function Hall at the Ortigas Center, 3 p.m. For inquiries contact Jackie Alvarez at 0927-917-8288.

UA&P's 2nd Imcea Awards

THE INTEGRATED MARketing Communications Effectiveness Awards (Imcea), an initiative of the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) School of Communication recognizes laudable marketing communications programs of corporations, which aims to promote accountability and underlines the importance of corporate social responsibility and ethics. There are nine categories in the Imcea: Best New Product Brand Introduction, Best New Service Brand Introduction, Best Small Budget Product Brand Campaign, Best Small Budget Service Brand Campaign, Best Established Product Brand Campaign, Best Established Service Brand Campaign, Best Integrated Internal Marketing Program, Best Innovative and Integrated Media Campaign and Best Insights and Strategic Thinking. The "Imcea 2" awards night will be held on July 6. Submission of case-study entries will be from April 18 to 20. For inquiries, please contact Dette Malayo at 634-6096 or 637-0912 local 393, or dmalayo@uap.edu.ph.

Berkley Phils reaches P1 billion premium collections in 2006

MULTINATIONAL COMPANY BERKLEY INTERNAtional Philippines Inc (Bipi), reached a consolidated P1.066 billion in premium collections for the year ended December 2006. In still unaudited figures, Berkley International Life Insurance Company Inc posted premium collections amounting to P167 million while pre-need company Berkley International Plans Inc collected P899 million, both in 2006 alone. Even with image problems continuing to beset the pre-need industry last year, Bipi total assets amounted to P5.3 billion with reserves of P3.6 billion. This milestone further assures clients of Berkley and its distributor, Family First Inc, of the company's stability and reliability in meeting its financial obligations in the future. Four prestigious banks that are considered among the strongest in the industry - Deutsche Bank, Equitable PCI Bank, Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company, Union Bank and ING Barings Trust and Asset Management Group - are handling BIP Trust Funds as trustees.

Be a totally Spies or Dice hero

FIND OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE THE CARTOON world's coolest kids as Totally Spies! Fashion Mission and Dice Robot Raptors come straight from your favorite shows to your nearest Jollibee store. The latest Jollibee Kids Meal offerings are inspired by Totally Spies' Alex, Clover, and Sam, and Dice Jet Siegel, Sam N'Dool, Motoraptor, and Mototyranno. These toys make seven great gadgets for young heroes. The toys come free with Yum Burgers, Jolly Spaghetti, Burger Steak Meal, or Chickenjoy Meal, and soft drinks in every Jollibee Kids Meal. Collect the complete sets until March 13.

Fajardo is new Picam president

BEDA G. FAJARDO, managing partner of Fajardo Law Offices and past director of the Rotary Club of Manila is the new president of the Philippine Institute of Construction Arbitrators and Mediators Inc (Picam) for 2007. Fajardo is the 10th president of Picam since it was incorporated in 1997. Fajardo is an active arbitration and mediation practitioner and maritime construction lawyer. The officers and board of trustees will be inducted into office by Chief Justice Reynato Puno on March 9 at the Manila Hotel.

Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Pilar Street, Zamboanga City

SECTION I. INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Zamboanga City Water District, through its Bids and Awards Committee I (BAC I), invites Suppliers/Manufacturers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

LOT NO.	PR NO.	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)	COST OF BID DOCUMENTS	DATE OF ISSUANCE OF BID DOCUMENTS	DATE OF PRE-BID CONFERENCE	DATE OF SUBMISSION/ OPENING OF BIDS
1	9574	Rice – (BEST QUALITY) for the Month of April	P 612,000.00	P 600.00	March 5 to 12, 2007	March 13, 2007	March 27, 2007
2	9593	Computer Laptop for use of Legal Department & PRO	P 140,000.00	220.00	March 5 to 12, 2007	March 13, 2007	March 27, 2007
3	9592	Printer-EPSON FX 2175	P 50,000.00	145.00	March 5 to 12, 2007	March 15, 2007	March 29, 2007
4	9584	HP Laserjet Printer 4260dln	P 280,000.00	325.00	March 5 to 12, 2007	March 15, 2007	March 29, 2007

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules & Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process of the Eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall be advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall be then awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT and inspect the Bidding documents at the address given below during office hours (8:00 – 5:00pm)

All Bids must be accompanied by a ***Bid Security in the form of Cash, Certified Check, Cashier's and Manager's Check in the amount of One Percent (1%) of the Approved Budget Cost***. Late Bids shall not be accepted

Bid Opening shall be at the 2nd Floor, ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT Main Office Building, Pilar St., Zamboanga City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidder's representative's who choose to attend at the address below

The ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time or prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

ZAMBOANGA CITY WATER DISTRICT
Mr. Noel M. Kawaguchi
Pilar St., Zamboanga City 7000
Telephone No. (062) 991-1556
Email:
Fax. (062) 991-2799

(Sgd.) ARNULFO A. ALFONSO
BAC I Chairman

(PDI- March 8, 2007)

Coffee exports hit 5-year high

By Ronnel W. Domingo

COFFEE EXPORT REVENUES REACHED A five-year high at $5.41 million in 2006, although this was barely a one-percent improvement from the previous year's sales, according to an agency attached to the Department of Trade and Industry.

The International Coffee Organization Certifying Agency reported that the 2006 figures brought sales from the past five years to a total of $17.8 million or an average of some $3.6 million a year.

Export values reached $5.36 in 2005, $3.83 million in 2004, $2.01 million in 2003 and $1.14 million in 2002.

Last year, soluble coffee accounted for 96 percent of exports, green beans, 3.9 percent and roasted coffee, 0.1 percent.

Japan bought 77 percent of soluble coffee shipments, while the rest were sent to South Korea, Greece, Malaysia, Spain, Thailand, Hong Kong, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Myanmar, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates, Western Samoa and the United States.

The report said 17 ICOCA-accredited exporters delivered last year's shipments to 19 countries.

Also, nine companies were accredited under the agency's Special Export Authorization program. The new registrants brought the number of accredited exporters to 58.

Created in 1980, ICOCA is tasked with the negotiation and implementation of the International Coffee Agreement in the Philippines to keep export destinations—mostly country-signatories of the ICA—open to Philippine coffee shipments.

Since the country signed the ICA 36 years ago, the Philippines has remained a member of good standing in the International Coffee Organization, which is the international body that administers the United Nations-recognized multilateral coffee agreement among the world's 75 coffee producing and consuming countries.

The ICOCA acts as the export marketing and promotional arm of the P30-billion Philippine coffee industry, on which 80,000 farmers and 300,000 employees and workers are dependent for their livelihood and employment.

North Cotabato rides on the rubber rage

MINDANAWORLD

Joji Ilagan-Bian

NATURAL rubber is an environmentally desirable material and comes from a replenishable source. At the end of their working lives, the rubber trees are used to make furniture and are replaced with young trees to ensure future production.

Natural rubber itself is readily biodegradable and non-toxic. Rubber is a versatile material that figures in the manufacture of 50,000 or more articles, from space ships to submarines.

Because of natural rubber's versatility and usability, the demand for it is assured—its future is tied to the global economy. The consumption of rubber worldwide is predicted to rise to 12.5 million tons in 2020—a 41.3-percent increase from 2005.

The top 3 rubber importers in the world are China, the US and Europe. China alone, the number one market in the world, consumed 5 million tons in 2005.

Currently, farm-gate prices of raw rubber range from P32 to P42 per kilo, with 50 to 52 percent dry rubber content. On the other hand, the semi-processed rubber are being sold at a price running between P92 to P96 per kilo. Demand for semi-processed rubber here and abroad is expected to go up until 2015.

Mindanao's rubber share

The Philippines has a comparative advantage in rubber production over other Asian countries because of its fertile soil, favorable climate, available labor force and access to international market. Yet, we struggle in rubber export, trying to catch up with other South East Asian countries in supplying the brisk demand for rubber in the world market.

World export volume of rubber was 6.73 million metric tons in 2003, with total value of $6.19 billion. In 2003, the leading exporters were Thailand ($2.79 billion), Indonesia ($1.49 billion) and Malaysia ($.094 billion). Alarmingly, Philippine exports that year accounted for a meager 0.9% of world volume valued at $618 million.

In 2003, rubber was the top export earner for Mindanao, registering sales of $44.2 million from production volume of 32.8 million kilograms. Last year, the Zamboanga peninsula was able to produce 146,000 metric tons of raw dried rubber—a slight increase of 3 percent from the previous year's 143,000 metric tons. The Zamboanga peninsula has been the only major rubber producer in the country, contributing at least 48 percent of the total rubber produced in the country.

The country's rubber exports are now at $36.5 million. The Philippines only has about 29 million bearing trees, producing 315,600 metric tons.

At present, the total area planted to rubber in the country is pegged at 81,925 hectares, with Zamboanga Sibugay having the largest area with 19,576 hectares, followed by North Cotabato and Basilan.

North Cotabato rubber development

North Cotabato launched an aggressive campaign to strengthen the country's rubber industry by encouraging provinces all over the island to establish a modern-based integrated farming system that is technologically advance and globally competitive. The Department of Agriculture declared North Cotabato to be the lead province in rubber development.

At the recent International Rubber Conference held in Davao City, a representative of International Rubber Institute (IRI) projected that the current world market for rubber would double by 2010. Foreign experts see bright prospects for the rubber industry in the North Cotabato, with the growing global demand for the commodity.

The North Cotabato region has at least 32,000 vacant lands that are suitable for growing rubber.

In 15 years, authorities expect at least one million hectares to be planted to rubber, with each hectare yielding an average of two metric tons a year. This development will create one million new jobs. And if we add those who are needed in producing rubber farm implements, like tapping knives, rings, etc., the count could easily run up to 1.5 million jobs.

The North Cotabato provincial government has organized several rubber development initiatives. Among them were the passage of the Cotabato Rubber Development Code and the formation of the Cotabato Rubber Development Board.

The provincial government also co-organized a one-year rubber technology course offered by the University of Southern Mindanao, and initiated a Rubber Technology Training program for trainers and decision makers. The local government also organized visits to Malaysia and Vietnam rubber plantations.

Empowering local rubber farmers will mean better lives for the Muslims and Christians in far away North Cotabato. The "rubber" stamp of peace and development may finally be just around the corner.

(Joji Ilagan Bian is a strong advocate for Mindanao; chair, Joji Ilagan Foundation; chair, Mindanaworld Foundation Inc.; chair, Mindanao TVET; Mindanao rep., Export Development Council. E-mail comments to jojibian2@yahoo.com)

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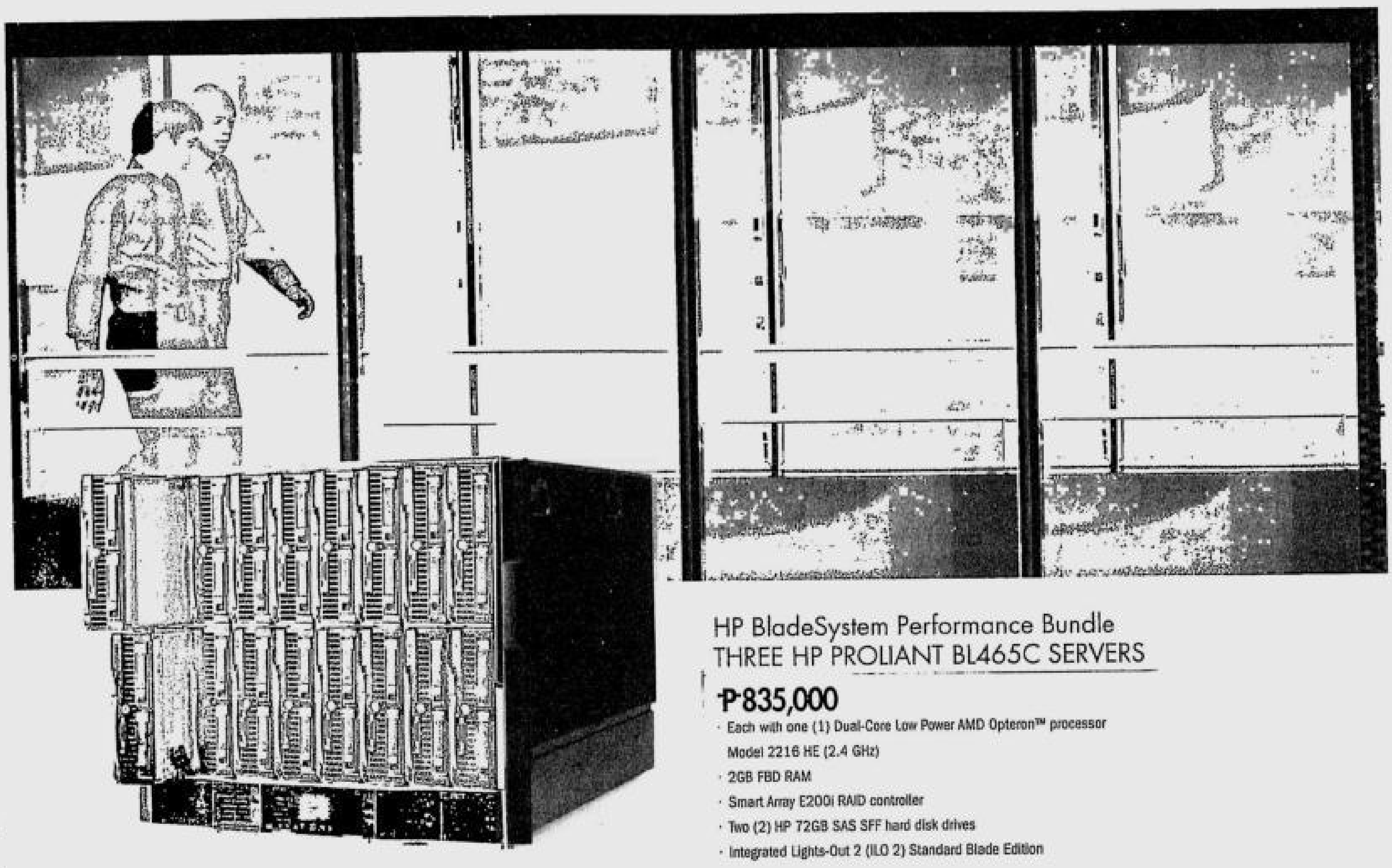

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Presenting the HP ProLiant BladeSystem – your IT consolidation system. Engineered for enterprise level performance and scalability.

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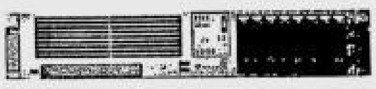
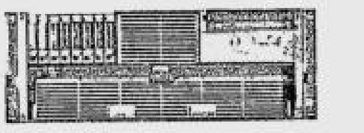


HP PROLIANT DL385 G2

₱220,000

- One Dual-Core AMD Opteron™ 2210 HE Processor (1.8 GHz, 68 Watts) (up to two supported)
- 2MB (2 x 1MB) Level 2 cache
- 1 GB PC2-5300 (DDR2-667Mhz) Memory, upgradeable to 16GB
- Embedded Multifunction Gigabit Network Adapters with TCP/IP Offload Engine
- HP Smart Array E200/128MB Controller (RAID 0/1/5)
- Supports up to 8 SAS hard disk drives
- Integrated Lights-out server management for remote server management
- Tool-less access and quick deploy rail system



HP PROLIANT DL585 G2

₱515,000

- Two AMD Opteron™ Processors 8214, Dual-Core (2.2 GHz, 95 Watts) (up to 4 supported)
- 1 MB Integrated Level 2 Cache
- 2GB PC2-5300 (DDR-667Mhz) Memory, upgradeable to 64 GB
- Two (2) Embedded Multifunction Gigabit Network Adapters with TCP/IP Offload Engine
- HP Smart Array P400/256MB Controller (RAID 0/1/5)
- Supports up to 8 SAS hard disk drives
- Integrated Lights-out server management for remote server management
- Tool-less access and quick deploy rail system

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
Maynila, Pilipinas

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project/Location/ Brief Description	Aircraft Charter Providers for the transport of currency/gold requirements to and from the various BSP Regional Offices/Branches, per BSP terms of reference
Approved Budget for the Contract	A. P23,300,000.00 for Small Aircraft } indicative B. 21,400,000.00 for Big Aircraft } only
Completion date	One (1) year contract reckoned from the date of execution of the contract

Prospective bidders should have undertaken three (3) or more similar contracts awarded and completed within the last five (5) years (Y2002 to present) aggregating to at least 50% of the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to be bid and that the largest of these contracts must be at least 25% of the ABC. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	5 March - 22 March 2007, up to 2:00 p.m. only
2. Pre-Bid Conference	23 March 2007, 9:30 a.m.
3. Opening of Bids	10 April 2007, 9:30 a.m.
4. Bid Evaluation	These shall be in accordance with the prescribed periods allowed in the Implementing Rules Regulations (IRR)-A of R.A. No. 9184 dated 10 January 2003
5. Post-qualification	
6. Notice of Award	

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of 0.05% of the total ABC's of items to be bid out, to the BSP Cashier.

The BSP assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

The BSP reserves the right to reject any and all bid proposals, or declare the bidding a failure, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation.

(Sgd.) **JUAN DE ZUÑIGA, JR.**
Chairman

(PDI--March 8, 2007)

BCDA

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

ASSET DISPOSITION PROGRAM – PHASE 3

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) is inviting interested proponents to participate in Phase 3 of BCDA's Asset Disposition Program (ADP Phase 3), particularly the resumption of the disposition of the development and privatization of the approximately 2,632 square meter Campus Gateway property located in Bonifacio Global City.

Interested proponents may submit their Letters of Interest to BCDA and can purchase the Terms of Reference (TOR) for bidding for the development and privatization of Campus Gateway that outlines, among others, the requirements that will enable proponents to participate in the privatization.

The TOR for Campus Gateway will be ready for distribution to interested proponents from 01 to 13 March 2007 at the BCDA Corporate Center. A non-refundable fee of PhP5,000.00 is charged for the TOR and payable to the BCDA in Cash or Manager's Check.

A Conference among interested proponents is tentatively set on 14 March 2007 (10:00 a.m.) at the BCDA Corporate Center, 2nd Floor, Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St. Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City. The objective of the conference is to discuss the property, the TOR, and other clarifications from interested proponents.

Interested proponents can direct their inquiries to:

THE CHAIRMAN
Asset Disposition Program Committee – 3
Bases Conversion and Development Authority
BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center
31st St. Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City
E-mail Address: **arzosa@bcda.gov.ph** or **blandal@bcda.gov.ph**

or they can contact Ms. Aileen Zosa or Ms. Bambie Andal at telephone numbers 816-6666 or 816-1043.

(Sgd.) **VICTOR V. ZABLAN**
Chairman
ADP Phase 3 Committee

(PDI–March 1 & 8, 2007)

NOTICE TO PUBLIC

Please be informed that PROVISIONAL RECEIPTS (PR's) issued to agents with the following number are hereby declared null and void effective February 23, 2007.

571-580 B; 9551-9560 B; 13281-13290 B; 14871-14880 B; 14971-14980 B; 17851-17860 B; 18011-18020 B; 18051-18060 B; 18131-18140 B; 18291-18300 B;18411-18420 B; 18471-18480 B; 18681-18690 B; 18691-18700 B; 18811-18820 B; 18871-18880 B; 19081-19090 B; 19091-19100 B; 19111-19120 B; 19161-19170 B; 19381-19390 B; 19401-19410 B; 19511-19520 B; 19561-19570 B; 19571-19580 B; 19581-19590 B; 19591-19600B; 19621-19630 B; 19821-19830 B; 20361-20370 B; 20481-20490 B; 20491-20500 B; 21181-21190 B; 21641-21650 B; 21811-21820 B; 23841-23850 B; 24121-24130 B; 24241-24250 B: 24251-24260 B; 24291-24300 B; 24331-24340 B; 24661-24670 B; 24821-24830 B; 27071-27080 B; 27121-27130 B;27091-27100 B; 27171-27180 B; 27181-27190 B; 27221-27230 B; 27281-27290 B; 27311-27320 B; 27331-27349 B; 27341-27350 B;27401-27410 B; 27411-27420 B; 27451-27460 B; 27521-27520 B; 27591-27600 B; 27601-27610 B; 27621-27630 B; 27661-27670 B; 27671-27680 B; 27681-27690 B; 27731-27740 B; 27751-27760 B; 27781-27790 B; 27811-27820 B; 27821-27830 B; 27831-27840 B; 27841-27850 B; 27861-27890 B; 27921-27930 B; 27961-27970 B; 28131-28140 B; 28161-28170 B; 28171-28180 B; 28191-28200B; 28201-28210 B; 28231-28240 B; 28241-28250 B; 28271-28280 B; 28281-28290 B; 28311-28310B; 28341-28350 B; 28451-28460 B; 28481-28490 B; 77541-77550 B; 78331-78340 B; 0021-0030 IGN; 0041-0050 IGN; 0061-0070 IGN; 0073-0080 IGN; 0081-0090 IGN; 0093-0100 IGN; 0101-0110 IGN; 0125-0130 IGN; and 0262 SGO;

FORTUNE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY INC.
162 Legaspi St., Legaspi Village, Makati City

(PDI–March 8, 2007)

ANECO
AGUSAN DEL NORTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Km. 2, J.C. Aquino Avenue, Butuan City
Tel. Nos. (085) 341-9034; (085) 341-7936; Fax No. (085) 342-6000

INVITATION TO BID

The Agusan del Norte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ANECO) wishes to invite interested parties to Bid for the supply of the following:

Item/Description	Quantity
A. 15 KV Gas Vacuum Recloser (GVR SF6 Gas Auto Recloser With Poller Control Relay) Brand: Whipp & Bourne or Equivalent	3 units
B. Single Phase Reclosers (Recon or Surplus) 10 amps 13 15 amps 12 25 amps 15 35 amps 21 50 amps 21	82 units

Opening of bid proposals shall be conducted on March 16, 2007 at ANECO Conference Room at 2:00 P.M.

ANECO reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any minor defect in the proposal and accept the offer that will be evaluated to be the most advantageous to the cooperative.

(Sgd.) RODOLFO L. RANOCO
BAC Chairman

Noted:

(Sgd.) HORACIO T. SANTOS
General Manager

(PDI – March 8 & 9, 2007)

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES
1598 M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. J. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 522-0000; 526-0100 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the projects as stated below:

Item / Description	Approved Budget	Date/Time		Non-Refundable Fee
		Pre-Bid Conference	Deadline/ Opening of Bids	
Continuous Forms • 11" x 14 7/8", Blue Bar - 2,770 Bxs. 1 Ply	P2,136,000.00	March 15, 2007 9:30 AM	March 28, 2007 1:00 PM	P 1,900.00
- 1,120 Bxs. 2 Ply	990,100.00			
- 430 Bxs. 3 Ply	323,600.00			
• 11" x 9 1/2", with Logo 680 Bxs. 1 Ply	335,800.00			
21,630 Bdls. Plastic Jacket for ATM Card (Green)	P4,000,000.00	March 15, 2007 10:30 AM	March 28, 2007 1:00 PM	P 2,000.00
10,450 Bdls. Interbranch Deposit Accomodation Slip	P 376,000.00	March 15, 2007 3:30 PM	March 28, 2007 1:00 PM	P 2,500.00
11,700 Bdls. Cash Deposit Slip	372,000.00			
6,275 Bdls. Check Deposit Slip	838,000.00			
12,600 Bdls. Savings Signature Card with Logo	1,924,000.00			
3,650 Bdls. BIR Tax Payment Deposit Slip	1,398,000.00			

The Bid Documents will be available at the Procurement Department (ProcD) starting March 8, 2007 and can be secured upon payment of non-refundable fee indicated above.

The Pre-Bid Conference will be held at ProcD Conference Room, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, 1598 M. H. del Pilar cor. Dr. J. Quintos Sts., Malate, Manila.

For more information, please visit the ProcD-Requisitions Management Division or call us at telephone no. 551-2200 locals 2452, 2453, 7233 & 7234.

LANDBANK reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder(s).

(PDI--March 8, 2007)

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

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2927 Nagtahan St., San Miguel, Manila

BOARD OF INVESTMENTS

dti
DEPARTMENT OF TRADE & INDUSTRY
PHILIPPINES

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **YEHS OUTSOURCING CORPORATION** is applying for registration with the Board of Investments (BOI) as **New IT Export Service Firm in the Field of Operation of a Call Center on a Non-Pioneer Status** with project/plant site located at **SGI PROPERTIES, INC., Nono Limbaga Drive, Tanjay City, Negros Oriental.**

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing, under oath, with the BOI within three (3) days from the date of this publication.

(Sgd.) **RUDY B. CAÑA**
Director
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI–March 8, 2007)

LEGAL NOTICE

STATE OF ALABAMA
IN THE PROBATE COURT OF AUTAUGA COUNTY
Case No. 07-032

In re: The petition of Evangeline Guerrero Jones to change the name of Duncan Guerrero

PETITIONER'S NOTICE OF HEARING

To: Dante Rodriguez & Unknown Father
Father of Minor Child

Take notice, a Petition for change of Name for Minor has been filed in said Court by Mother of Minor and May 1, 2007 at 3:30 o'clock p.m. has been set for hearing on same in said Court in the City of Prattville, Alabama.

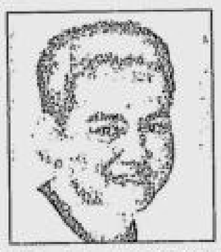
Be advised, if you intend to contest name change, you must file a written response within thirty (30) days with the Probate Court, 176 West Fifth Street, Prattville, Alabama 36067-3041

Done this 22nd day of February, 2007.

(Sgd.) ALFRED Q. BOOTH, Judge of Probate

(PDI--March 1, 8 & 15, 2007)

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC



RODEL P. GONZALES

CRIMINAL CASE NO. 05-1464

This is to inform the public that **RODEL P. GONZALES** whose picture appears above has been issued alias warrant of arrest by the Regional Trial Court, Branch 61, Angeles City, Pampanga for the crime of **QUALIFIED THEFT**. His last known address is #248 San Joaquin St., Sepung Bulaon, Porac, Pampanga.

Please direct any information leading to his arrest or whereabouts to:

George J. Brown
Tel. No. (045) 599-2157/58

(PDI–March 8, 2007)

Alpha Phi Beta forum scheduled March 9

A FORUM ON THE STATE OF THE PHILIPPINE Economy and Politics will be held by the Alpha Phi Beta Fraternity Chancery on Friday, March 9, at 7:30 p.m. at the Balai Kalinaw, UP Diliman, Quezon City.

Dr. Benjamin Diokno, an economist and former budget secretary, will speak on "The State of the Philippine Economy." Newspaper columnist Nelson Navarro will discuss "Philippine Politics." Rep. Francis "Chiz" Escudero, a senatorial candidate, will talk about his experiences as a key participant in Philippine politics.

The forum is open to the public. Inquiries may be made by calling Anne Celestino at Tel. No. 4486445 or 3765504.

People, Events & Products

Abbott, Healthway join hands for Total Nutrition Care

TO PROVIDE MORE FILIPINOS with the latest information on health and nutrition as well as free services such as fat analysis and blood glucose screening, Abbott Nutrition and Healthway Medical, the country's leaders in their respective fields, have recently forged a partnership to bring their services to shopping malls and other accessible places.

Called the Total Nutrition Care program, the partnership will bring Abbott Nutrition's expertise and free services on health and nutrition to Healthway Medical's numerous outlets nationwide.

"We are excited about this new partnership, and we know that more Filipinos will benefit from the combined expertise and excellent service delivery of our two companies," according to general manager Rene Bastl of Abbott Nutrition during the formal contract signing for the memorandum of agreement between the two parties.

For her part, Healthway Medical sales and marketing director Carmi de Leon said the partnership with Abbott Nutrition would further boost the service capability of Healthway's outlets that will ultimately benefit more consumers and individuals who need vital and timely information on health and nutrition.

"It is an honor for Healthway Medical to be chosen as Abbott Nutrition's partner in this worthy endeavor. I am confident that our customers and the general public will benefit tremendously from this joint undertaking," she said.

Healthway Medical has six outlets in Metro Manila that are strategically located in malls such as Shangri-La Plaza in Mandaluyong, Greenbelt Shopping Center in Makati, Robinsons Place in Manila, Festival Mall, Alabang Town Center in Alabang and SM City North Edsa in Quezon City.

Under the Total Nutrition Care program, Healthway patients can avail of free services in Healthway Medical outlets such as fat analysis, blood glucose screening, ECG screening, nutrition counseling by registered dieticians, free sampling of Ensure and Glucerna SR, membership in Abbott's Home Care Solutions, as well as brochures and leaflets on the values of nutrition.

Abbott Nutrition will also provide Continuing Medical Education to Healthway doctors by providing the latest update in Clinical Nutrition.

Ensure is Abbott's premium nutrition formula and the undisputed market leader worldwide that is clinically proven and number one doctor recommended for people who want to make sure that they get all the essential nutrients their body needs daily.

Ensure has a Unique Heart Defense System that helps control blood pressure and helps prevent cholesterol build-up. It is rich in soluble fiber, 28 vitamins and minerals, and a scientifically designed, thoroughly tested antioxidant system that has been identified as beneficial in promoting cardiovascular health.

Glucerna SR, on the other hand, is the leading diabetes nutrition product in the market that has a unique Space Released (SR) energy system that allows the body to absorb sugar slowly to minimize after-meal sugar level surges and provide sustained release of energy throughout the day.

Glucerna SR also contains high levels of monounsaturated fatty acids to help help improve lipid profiles and promote a healthy heart, while its nutrient-dense and low calorie formula is designed for better weight management.

More details about Abbott and Healthway's Total Nutrition Care may be obtained by calling 689-0444 or by e-mail at hcs.ph@abbott.com

ASIATRUST HONORED FOR ITS 10TH YEAR AS PSE LISTED COMPANY

Asiatrust Bank (ATB) was recently honored by the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) in its 10th year anniversary as a publicly listed company (PSE-Listed: ASIA). Asiatrust Bank became a publicly listed company and concluded its Initial Public Offering in October 1996, making it the first private development bank to raise equity from the capital market. To commemorate the occasion, PSE president and CEO Francisco Ed Lim awarded the bank with a plaque of recognition accepted by president Dionisio Ong, followed by the ringing of the opening bell by ATB board members and executive officers. Shown in photo during the ceremony are (from left) PSE president and CEO Francisco Ed Lim, PSE director Jose Luis Javier, ATB director Enrique Herbosa, ATB vice chair Roland Garcia, ATB chair Gloria Garcia and ATB president Dionisio Ong.

Message of Thanks

His beloved wife **Ma. Paz Roces Sotelo**;
children and in-laws, **Jerry & Jessica**,
Henry Jr. & Kiku, **Robert (†) & Hiroko**, **Stephen**;
his grandchildren, **Stephanie**, **Danielle**, **Nicole**,
Matthew, **Michael**, **Nicholas**, and **Alyssa**,
relatives and friends of the late

HENRY ANTHONY BRIMO

February 21, 1913 - March 3, 2007

wish to convey their heartfelt gratitude to all those
who paid their last respects, offered Masses and
prayers, sent flowers, messages of sympathy
and Novena Masses, who in various ways
gave comfort to the family in their time of sorrow.

The Board of Trustees, Faculty, Administration and Students of

LYCEUM
LYCEUM OF THE PHILIPPINES UNIVERSITY
JOSE P. LAUREL LEGACY

Wish to express their deep sense of loss
on the death of their beloved Trustee (1976 – 2007)

JESUS ANTONIO A. AVANCEÑA

The memory of his integrity, humility
and endearing warmth and kindness
will long remain with us.

His remains rest at Santuario de San Antonio where interment
will take place on Saturday, March 10 after the 10:00 a.m. Mass.

MESSAGE OF THANKS

On the fortieth day of **Inay's** joining our Creator and
her husband,
Rufino C. Gotanco, Sr., we, the family of the late

PATRIA M. GOTANCO

18 March 1915 - 27 January 2007
of Cajidiocan, Romblon and Sta. Mesa, Manila

thank our relatives, friends and associates who sent flowers, mass cards
and messages of sympathy, and joined us in our time of sorrow.

Rey & Chel, Roger, Chris, Tancio & Mila, Hati & Joey, Chayong & Jun,
and **Inay's** grandchildren and great-grandchildren

"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him; He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my Fortress, I will never be shaken." **Psalm 62:1**

Our Dearly Beloved

ROBERTO OLAZO ESPIRITU

"PABLO/PABLING"
of San Pedro, Laguna and Ermita, Manila
July 13, 1929 – March 4, 2007

His children Former Manila Councilor **Felix** and **Ahyien**; **Rey & Sylvia**; **Zonnie**; **Gloria & Haruki**; **Vicky & Raul**; **Willy & Mau**; **Noel & Joy**; and **Nerisa** and grandchildren; his brother & sister & brother & sister-in-laws **Dolores & Tazar**; **Felicitas & Tony** and **Arthur & Nene** and relatives request the pious readers to join them in prayers for his eternal rest in the kingdom of our Lord.

His remains lie in state at Malate Catholic Church (Our Lady of Remedies).

Holy Mass will be celebrated on March 10, 2007, Saturday, 11:00 a.m. at the Malate Catholic Church. Cremation will follow at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque.

Death Notice

BENJAMIN "Burabo" C. REYES

Joined our Creator on March 1, 2007
at the age of 79.

His body lies in state at 41 Sitio Sto. Rosario, Victoria, Tarlac. Interment will be on March 10, 2007, 8 a.m. at Victoria Memorial Cemetery.

TAN CHUNG KIAT

Joined our Creator on March 3, 2007
at the age of 82.

His body lies in state at Anita V. Funeral Homes, Santiago Boulevard, General Santos City.

Interment will be on Monday, March 12, 2007 at General Santos Chinese Cemetery.

> *"I am the way, the truth and the life.*
> *No one comes to the Father except through Me."*
> **John 14:6**

God saw you getting tired when a cure was not to be
So He closed His arms around you and whispered, "Come to Me"
You didn't deserve what you went through and so He gave you rest
God's garden must be beautiful. He only takes the best.
So when we saw you sleeping, so peaceful and free of pain
We could not wish you back to suffer that again.

DRA. MA. DELIA ALAMPAY LIMPINGCO

Peacefully joined our Lord on March 5, 2007
at the age of 70.

Her loving husband **Romeo** (†); children and children-in-laws: **Liza & Paul Abastillas**, **Rodel & Maybelle**, **Rico & Ann**, **Ronald**; grandchildren: **Enzo**, **Rapa** and **Anica**; brother & sisters and in-laws: **Gloria & Jose Oliveros**, **Walfrido & Nora Alampay**, **Priscilla & Alfredo** (†) **Reyes**, and other relatives and friends, give thanks to the Lord for the blessing of her life.

Her remains lie in state at Arlington East, The Garden Chapels, C. Raymundo St., cor. Mercedes Avenue, San Miguel Avenue, Pasig City.

Interment will be on March 11, 2007 at the Holy Cross Memorial Park after the 1:00 p.m. Mass.

RUFO "PIP" MARASIGAN GADI

Born December 18, 1959

Peacefully joined his Creator on February 27, 2007
in California, U.S.A. at the age of 47.

Ateneo Class Grade School 1973
High School 1977

His beloved wife **Elsa**, daughters **Joey**, **Jessie**, **Jackie**
... anticipated son **Jeremiah Rufo**

Parents: **Juan Gadi Jr.** (†) and **Antonia Marasigan**
Brothers: **Milo**, **Montes**, **Ikel**
Sisters: **Jinji**, **Bambi**, **Jeju**
in laws, relatives and friends request to pray for his soul.

Wake was at Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills. Interment was held last March 6, 2007 (Tuesday) at Forest Lawn Hills, Hollywood, CA after the 10:00 a.m. Mass at St. Dominic's Church.

Novena Mass and prayer in Manila are held daily at 6:15 p.m. at the Santuario de San Jose Greenhills from February 28 to March 8, 2007.

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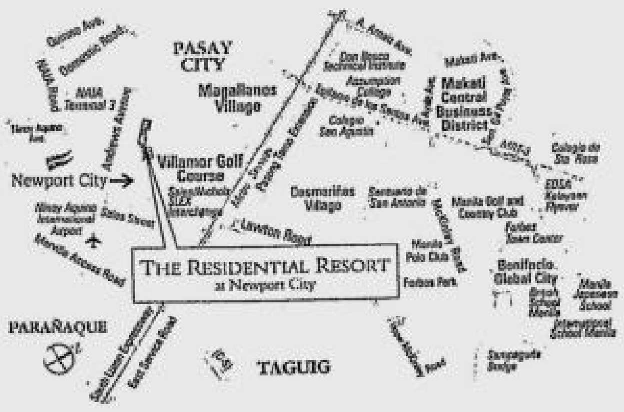
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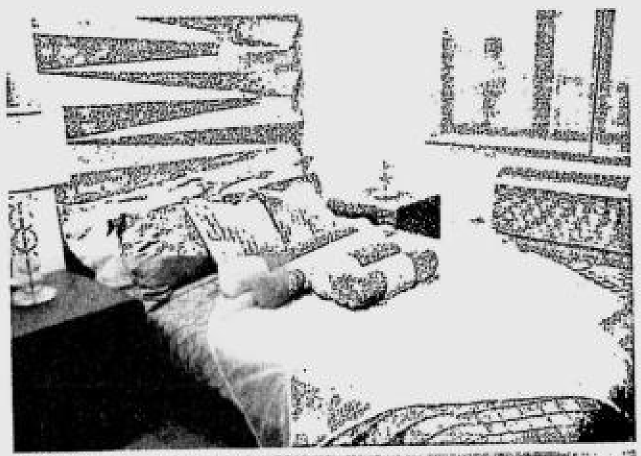

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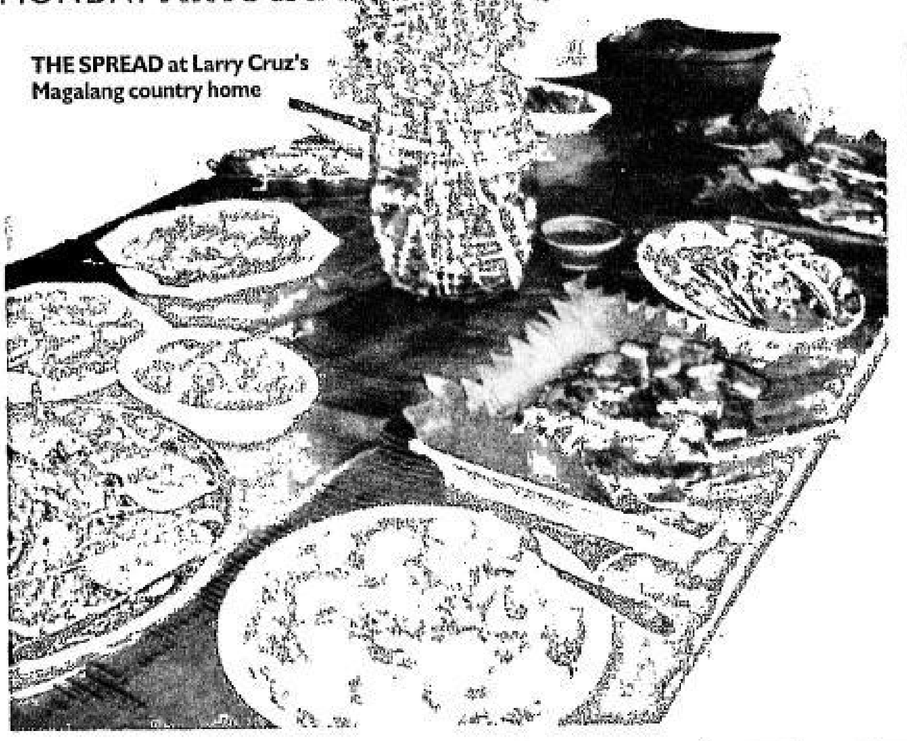
Website: www.inquirer.net/lifestyle

LIFESTYLE

Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

sms feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) **or email us at** lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph



THE SPREAD at Larry Cruz's Magalang country home

The best

INQUIRER LIFESTYLE IS ON A mission. We are looking for the best culinary offerings hereabouts and we need your help, dear readers.

For starters, we want tips on where to find the best Sisig, be it a fine dining restaurant, bar, beer house, canteen or turo-turo, in whatever city or town in the Philippines.

Where have you eaten the best Sisig? In 30 words or less, tell us why you think it is the best you've ever tasted. Please include the name and address of the restaurant as well as your name and address. Send by text to +63916-2001160 (Globe) or +639183824061 (Smart), or by email to thebest@inquirer.com.ph. Deadline is March 22, 2007.

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COUNTRY COOKING

Micky Fenix

The man and his menu

ABE, FOR MANY PEOPLE who know the restaurant row at Serendra at The Fort in Taguig, is where Filipino food is served with a bit of Spanish and French dishes. "Abe" means friend in Pampango. It was also the nickname of the late Emilio Aguilar Cruz, journalist, artist, ambassador.

The restaurant is among the many that Larry J. Cruz and his LJC Group operate. But Abe is a tribute to his father.

The circular design of the restaurant gives a picture panorama of Abe's photographs with friends and family. Even if you didn't know him, you'd be introduced right away to this man who wrote in the time of typewriters and who walked with important men, fellow artists and writers.

Even before I met Abe, I had heard many stories about him. I remember a description of him as a "good eater." Those who were fortunate to be included in his Chinatown sorties enjoyed the buffet in restaurants instead of just dishes.

My first encounter with Abe was watching him eat with Nora Daza at her Au Bon Vivant in Ermita. They were savoring what looked like some wonderful cheese with toast. And they were presumably speaking in French because they were so animated but quite serious.

Abe served as ambassador to UNESCO and was based in Paris. Nora was once a resident running the first Filipino restaurant in Paris, Aux Iles Philippines.

It was "Is there life after Au Bon Vivant," my first food story, that got his attention. I presumed it did because he sent word that he liked my interview with Nora Daza after her restaurant, Au Bon Vivant, closed.

Computer talk

Yet it wasn't about food that he asked to meet me. It was about computers. He needed someone to tell him how to use this newfangled machine that he traded for his typewriter.

It amazed me then to know that this former editor was open to learning new technology, much more open than many of the younger editors I would train in my former life as computer consultant.

THE MAN/ C2

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DINING OUT

New menu additions

Starting March 1, Super Bowl of China introduces eight additions to its menu of authentic Cantonese dishes. These include the Hot Shrimp Salad, Sotanghon with Minced Pork, Twice Cooked Pork Szechuan Style, Pork Strips with Kangkong with Chinese Bagoong, Soft Shell Crabs with Spicy Salt, Fresh Cuttlefish with Shacha Sauce, Fish Fillet in Light Soy and Spicy Taosi Sauce, and Sago Dumpling for dessert.

The new dishes are available for a limited time only. Call 7378888.

DISCOVERY SUITES' Restaurant 5 offers lunch and dinner buffet for P695+ Monday-Friday. The buffet features dishes by chefs David Pardo de Ayala and Enrique Abasta. Italian pasta and Asian noodles are featured daily. The buffet's live cooking section changes daily. Diners can sample crepes, Rib-Eye, Roasted Suckling Pig, Crispy Pata, among others. Call 6838222 local 3855.

MANDARIN ORIENTAL'S The Tivoli features Swiss cuisine in "A Culinary Journey to the Swiss Alps" until March 4. The Tivoli is open for lunch Monday-Friday, and dinner, daily. Call 7508888 local 2431 or 2432.

DUSIT HOTEL'S Benjarong Royal Thai Restaurant presents "Sojourn to Bangkok," March 15-25 featuring a la carte dishes like Roti Gaeng Kiew Wan (green curry U.S. tenderloin with naan bread), Poo Talay Phad Phrik Thai Dum (stir-fried crab with spicy herbs), Nuea Sab Phad Makhea Yaw (stir-fried minced beef with eggplant), Pla Insee Savoey (deep-fried mackerel topped with green curry sauce) and Pop Oay Luy Fai (stir-fried spinach with prawns in oyster sauce). Call 8673333.

UNA MAS offers Breakfast Buffet that includes *arroz a la Cubana*, *tapa*, *longganisa* and *bangus*. Breakfast Buffet is open 6-10 a.m. daily at P250 per person. Una Mas has branches at Greenbelt (tel. 7573357) or Greenhills (7230012).

MANILA PAVILION HOTEL'S Patisserie presents "The Healthy Alternative" for the whole month of March. It's an eat-all-you-can spread of the freshest greens for the health conscious individuals. The buffet is available Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. and is priced at P350+ per person. Call 5261212 local 2326.

INTERCONTINENTAL MANILA presents Chilean Sea Bass Festival at the Prince Albert Rotisserie and an Argentinian Churrasco at Cafe Jeepney, March 8-26. Call 8159711 for details.

YOSHINOYA, the Japanese fast food restaurant, introduces the Yoshinoya Chicken Feast, a new selection of chicken treats. Diners can choose from Super Chicken Teriyaki Bowl, Yakitori Bento, Chicken Katsudon and Chicken Karaage.

The new meals complement Yoshinoya's other authentic Japanese food offerings, including *gyudon*, premium USDA beef prepared using a traditional 100-year-old recipe that comes with a bowl of steaming rice.

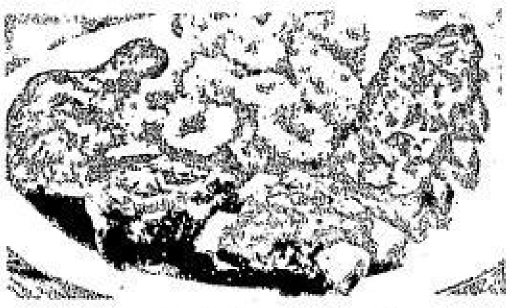
Now on its fifth year in the Philippines, Yoshinoya has unveiled a new restaurant concept featuring traditional Japanese elements with a modern touch. The new look can be seen at SM Megamall branch. Other Yoshinoya restaurants at Park Square 1 in Ayala Center, SM City North Edsa, Robinsons Galleria, and Greenhills Annapolis Carpark will soon be sporting the same look.

COUNTRY STYLE presents "Two Can Dine" starting Feb. 22. Diners can enjoy two servings of CountryStyle's featured products with huge discounts. The featured items include Spaghetti, Sandwich, Double Decker, and Sausage with Toast all served with regular iced tea. By purchasing two of these combos, you can get as much as 15 percent off. The promo runs until March 31.

CASCADA at Greenbelt 3 offers Power Lunch Menu consists of soup, salad and main course. The menu includes Cream of Broccoli and Spinach Soup, The Shrimp Bisque with Capsicum Coulis, the Yuletide Fruit Salad, among others. A must-try is the Pork Tenderloin and Vongole Pasta and the Roast Chicken and Scallop Risotto. Call 7574369.

SAN FRANCISCO COFFEE (SFC) recently opened its newest branch at the G/F of BMW Autozentrum Building along Madrigal Avenue, Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa. SFC's signature espresso drinks and frappes (which can also be ordered with a serving of ice cream scoop on top) are made from top-of-the-line coffee beans. SFC's filling dishes and desserts are also available. SFC-Alabang is open daily from 7 a.m.-11 p.m.

THE SYDNEY HOTEL in General Santos City recently launched its new dishes—Hot Tuna and Grape Salad, Spicy Beef Ribs, and the Chilean Steamed Pampano. Call 083-5525479.



SURF AND TURF. Tia Maria's serves a platter of tender baby back ribs and grilled chicken smothered with its special sauce. The mix is topped with crispy calamares fried golden brown.

SEGAFREDO ZANETTI offers a 20 percent discount on all its Italian pizzas until March 31. Diners can choose from pizza favorites like Segafredo's Pizza Margherita, Napoletan, Alle Melanzane, Pepperoni, Al Tonno, Capricciosa, Al Formaggi, Salmone and Quattro Stagioni. Segafredo (tel. 8925011 local 110 and 108) has branches at Greenbelt 2, The Podium and Greenhills.

THE panoramic photo inside Abe

The man and his menu

From page C1

He brought me to his pad (that seemed the proper term for his townhouse then) where he showed me his Apple computer and I gave him the basic moves, so to speak. He had merienda ready, a cup of hot chocolate and *ensaymada*. After the lessons, he gave me a book that he said he hoped I'd like.

His gift, "Simple French Food" by Richard Olney, was a quiet introduction to French cooking by a great writer.

Olney explains cooking in a way where you don't get overwhelmed with technique. He makes you believe that you can cook the recipes. And he gives a background of the dish, a good guide for a researcher.

I suppose it was Abe's way of pointing me to the right books to read if I wanted to be a food writer.

While he was known as a good eater, he hated being called a gourmand. Too pretentious, he said. I remember how one food writer came to me puzzled because Abe refused to be interviewed about his food preferences and even scolded her for attempting to. I took that as a warning.

Joaquin biography

Whatever I know of him I learned from what other people told me. And from his biography, "A Frank Sketch of E. Aguilar Cruz" by Nick Joaquin.

How the book came to be written by National Artist Joaquin was the funny account in Larry Cruz's Introduction to the book. He told of Joaquin making him an offer to write the book that Larry couldn't refuse. And how, two months before Joaquin died, the manuscript was finished and how they "celebrated with beer at Cafe Adriatico."

Of course, the book was launched at Abe Restaurant. It was a gathering of familiar faces both in the crowd and in the pictures around us. Adrian Cristobal and Amando Doronila spoke of Abe the writer and colleague. Gilda Cordero Fernando and Ambeth Ocampo mostly shared their eating memories.

I suddenly remembered a photograph taken by Ed Santiago with Abe, Ambeth and Gilda staring at the lens but looking rather tired. Ed told me then that they had just gone around Pampanga eating from one place to the other. Listening to the stories of those sorties, I'm sure many people wished, as I did, that they could have been part of those adventures.

In the book, Claude Tayag, whose father Katoks or Renato was one of Abe's best friends, recounts Abe's visits to their Angeles home. Claude's Tatang Milio would be served "*camaru, betute, taba ng talangka, kilauin,* grilled *dalag*, fried *hito* with *buro* and a salad of mustard leaves." Those were Abe's Capampangan favorites and certainly included in the menu of Abe, the restaurant.

But other favorites from other places are there as well such as the *cassoulet*, a reminder of those years in France. Recipes were solicited from friends. That evening, Gilda sampled her *lumpia*. Thelma San Juan's *rellenong mais*, a recipe of her mother's, was taste-tested as well.

I was honored to have my name there, too, but gave no recipe, only my favorite, crispy *tadyang*. My balikbayan relatives get a thrill out of that.

In a way, I get to visit Abe in his Magalang hometown whenever Larry Cruz invites to his country home at the foot of Mt. Arayat. This is where Abe's ashes were scattered.

At Larry's princely *bahay kubo*, the spread on the table is what Abe used to eat and I imagine would have wanted me to taste. It is hometown comfort food one can have again and again and never grow tired of.

A LONG table full of hungry guests at Abe

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In an exclusive interview with TV chefs Rosebud, Dario, Niño and Tristan, when asked about what CCA, Manila provided them:

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Dario: "...skills and knowledge to start a catering business at age 17..."

Niño: "...discipline to achieve my goal to be a culinarian..."

Tristan: "...opportunities, directions in life, and the heart. The time of my life!"

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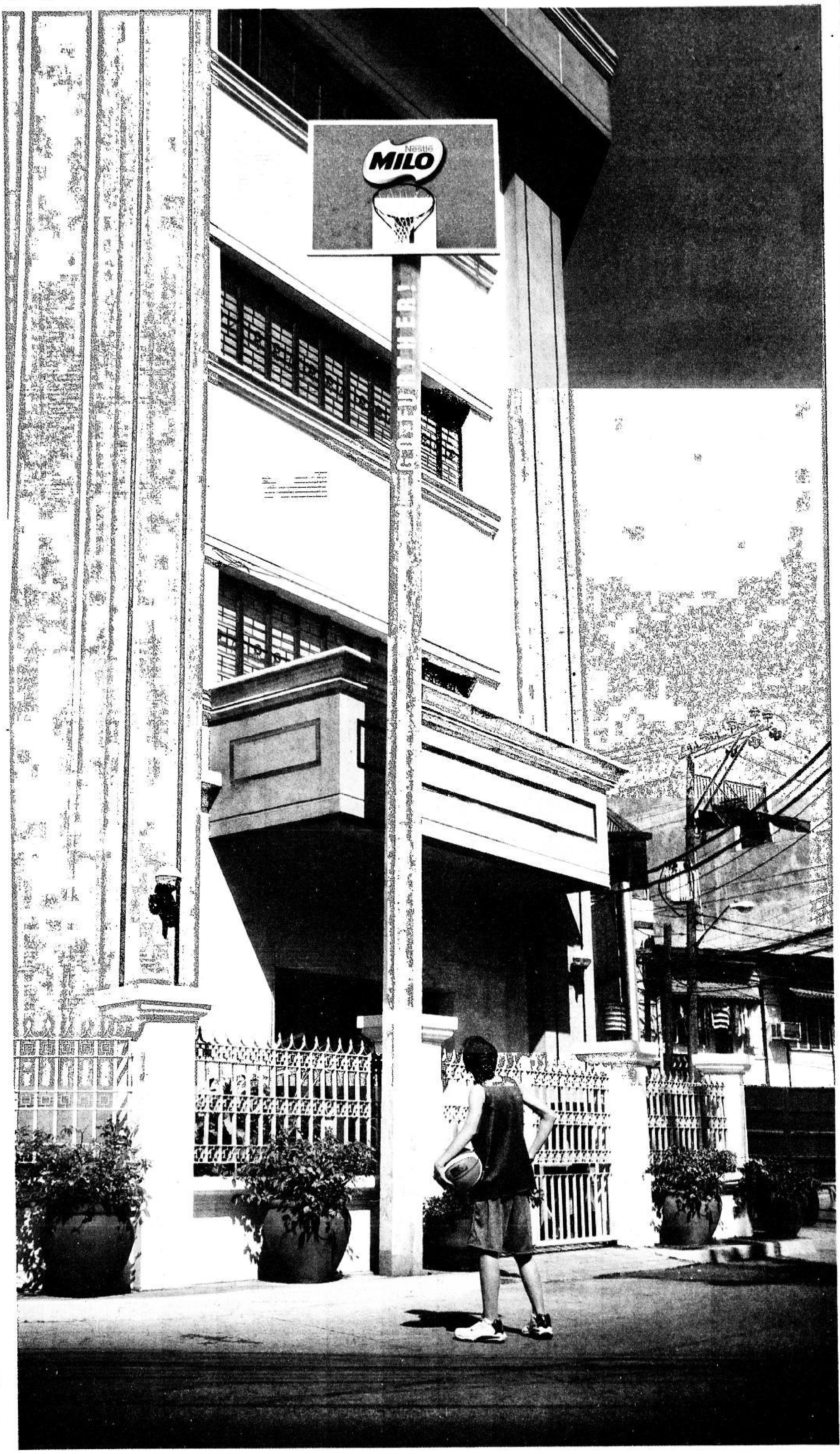
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Experts to talk on how to entertain in style

SAN MIGUEL PUREFOODS Culinary Center is holding Mobile Kusina's "Entertaining in Style" March 17, 1-5 p.m., at the San Miguel Head Office cafeteria, San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. It will feature event planner Rita Neri and culinary expert Reggie Aspiras. Party planning essentials will be covered in a lecture while a cooking demonstration will cover party dishes. Registration starts 12 noon onsite. For raffle tickets, present three empty wrappers of Magnolia, Monterey and Purefoods Hormel products. For My Great Food Club members, just present your GFC ID. Registration starts 12 noon onsite (tel. 6322000, 6719876 local 2771 and 402; website www.mygreatfood.com).

Bass-ed & baked

The Reggie Aspiras School of Culinary Arts will conduct the following classes:

March 9: Sea Bass '07 (all new)—Lasagna of Prawn and Bass, Bass with Balsamic Butter Sauce, Bass with Sherry Cream, Potato-crusted Bass with Vegetable Butter Sauce, Pan-fried Bass with Mushrooms, Mango Chutney Bass; sides

March 10: The Many Ways of Baked Macaroni and Spaghetti (all new)—Macaroni with Ragu and Mushroom Bechamel, Seafood with Dill Mascarpone Bechamel, Baked Spaghetti, Mixed Vegetable and Ground Beef with Cheddar Bechamel, Italian Sausage with Herbed Bechamel; bonus—My Favorite Children's Party Macaroni and Spaghetti

March 12: Black and Red Eggs (all new), Deep-fried Century Eggs with Dipping Sauce; Steamed Savory Suman with Mushrooms; Chicken, Pork and Prawns with Salted Eggs; Deep-fried Prawn Coated in Red Egg Batter; Fried Chicken Nuggets in Red Eggs; Fried Shrimp with Century Egg and Fruit Mayonnaise; Tender Loin of Pork with Red Egg Sauce; fried rice

March 14: Chinese Done My Way 2 '07 (all new)—Asian-style Paté, Pickled Ginger Steamed Sea Bass, Carrot Noodles with Hunan-style Lamb Loin, Chinese Paella with Mochi Fried Chicken, Green Tea Cake. Call 9289296, 9273008.

Indian cuisine

Maya Kitchen offers a cooking class, "Biryani and Kababs," March 10, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. The class will introduce students to Indian cuisine focusing on authentic techniques in preparing different types of menu, with the help of a Pakistani teacher.

"Basic Culinary" on March 13-16, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., will include an orientation on proper hygiene, sanitation and safety; nutrition and nutritional cooking; proper *mis en place* of *mirepoix*, stocks, soups, sauces, marinades, use of herbs and spices combinations, proper purchasing, storage, techniques for disjointing and boning poultry, filleting fish and meat fabrication.

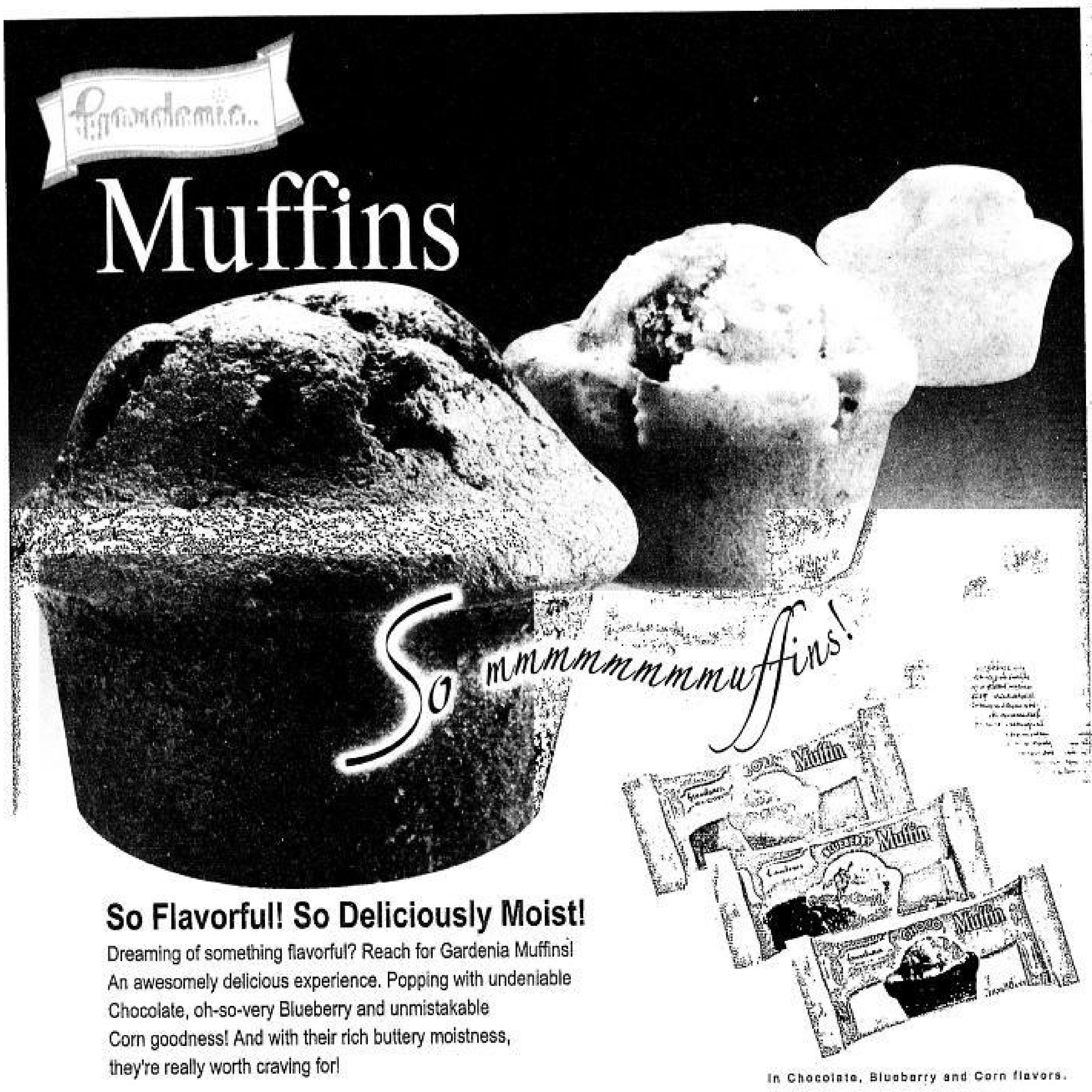
CULINARY expert Reggie Aspiras

"Steaks and Roasts Galore" on March 17, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., will teach how to make great-tasting steak and roasts. Learn famous steak and roast recipes like Beef Tournedos with Mustard Sauce, Pan-roasted Rosemary Chicken with Basil Mashed Potatoes Pan Ajus, Roasted Pork with Applesauce, Crispy Salmon with Siciliana Sauce, Osso Bucco and Steak. Lecture and preparation of basic steak, sauces, marinades and techniques of grilling are included.

"Fundamentals of Bakery Production" on March 20-23, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., will cover basic and commercial baking techniques including the use of ready mixes, yeast bread, quick bread, pies, cookies and cakes. Workshop exercise for commercial-scale productions is also included. Attendees get a free baking cookbook.

"Food Processing (Meat, Fruit and Vegetable Preservation)" will be offered March 21-23, 2-6 p.m. Menu includes Pastrami, Corned Beef, assorted native sausages and cold cuts, Kimchi, Mixed Vegetable Atchara, Mango Chutney, Sun-dried Tomatoes and assorted candied fruits (orange, pineapple, lemon).

Maya Kitchen is at 8/F, Liberty Building, A. Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Road), Makati City; tel. 8921185 or 8925011 local 108; e-mail mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph.



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The farmer's market cook

US Ambassador to RP Kristie A. Kenny and chef Richard Ruben

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

COOKBOOK AUthor, cooking teacher, writer, food consultant and chef Richard Ruben, fondly known as the Green Market Guru, came to town!

Ruben is one of the most celebrated cooking instructors at ICE, formerly Peter Kump's Cooking School. His book "The Farmer's Market Cookbook" was a top "pick" of People magazine and was awarded Best of the Best 2000 by Food & Wine.

Ruben's approach to food is rather eclectic. In his world travels, Richard absorbs all that he can from local produce, culture and food preparations.

He infuses his personal cooking style with the cuisine of the world, focusing on dishes that are easy enough for the home cook to prepare with a flair that is all his own.

Fortunately for us, we had a chance to experience Ruben at his finest just last week when United States Ambassador Kristie A. Kenny threw a wine and food pairing reception at her residence. The evening offered rich wines and decadent food amid glorious company.

Chef Ruben shines with his sinfully delicious yet easy to prepare recipes that I must share with you. These are some of the yum-

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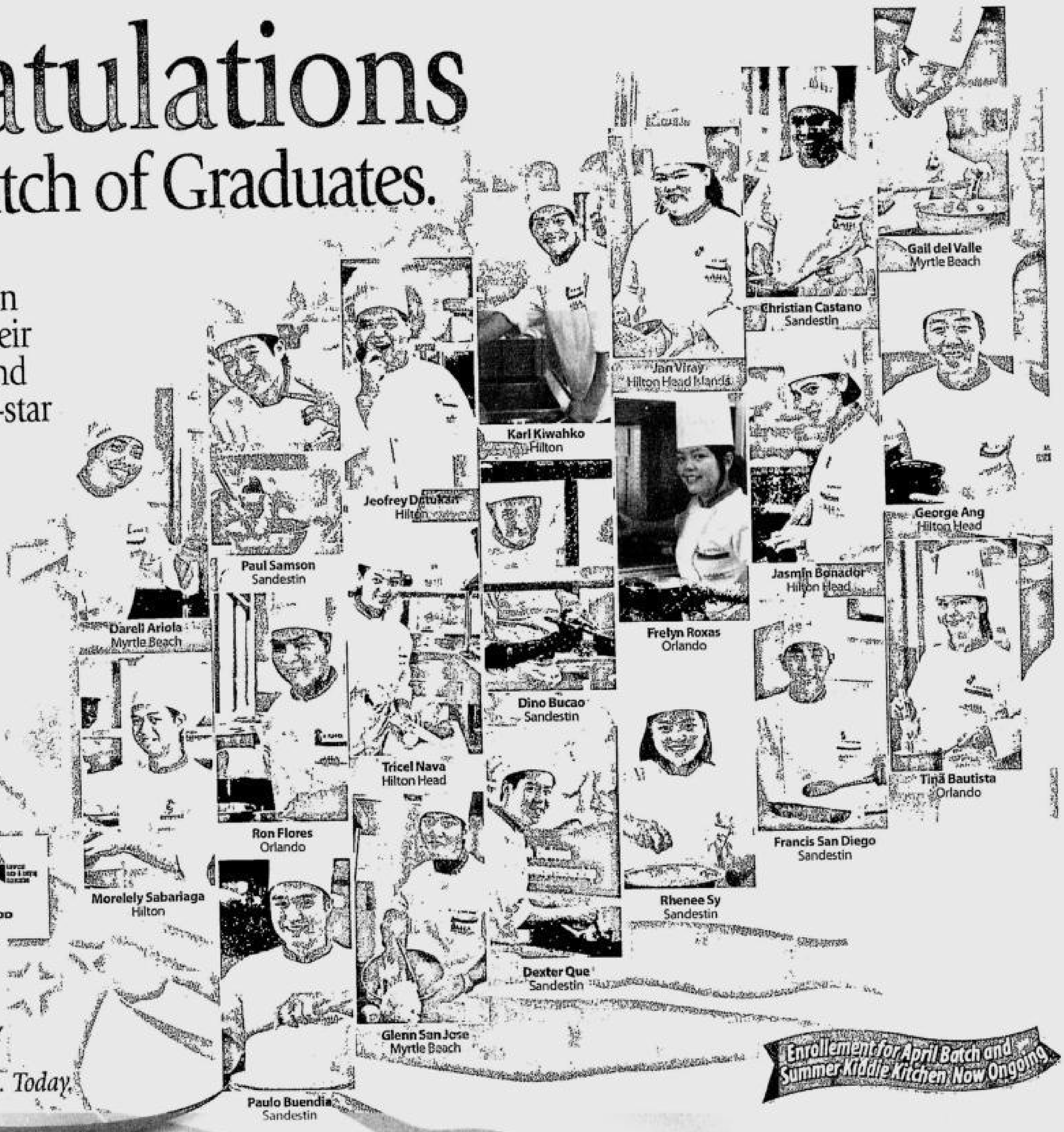

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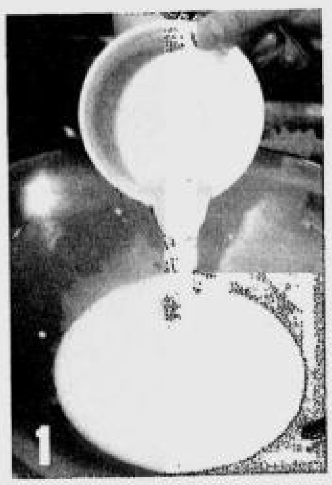
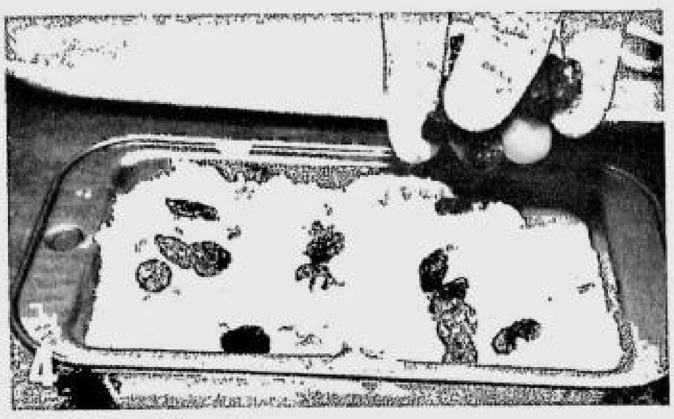


PREHEAT oven to 350°F. In a bowl, whisk together milk, egg, butter and sugar.

FOLD in French bread. Let it soak for a few minutes. Do not crush the bread.

ADD raisins and walnuts. Mix well.

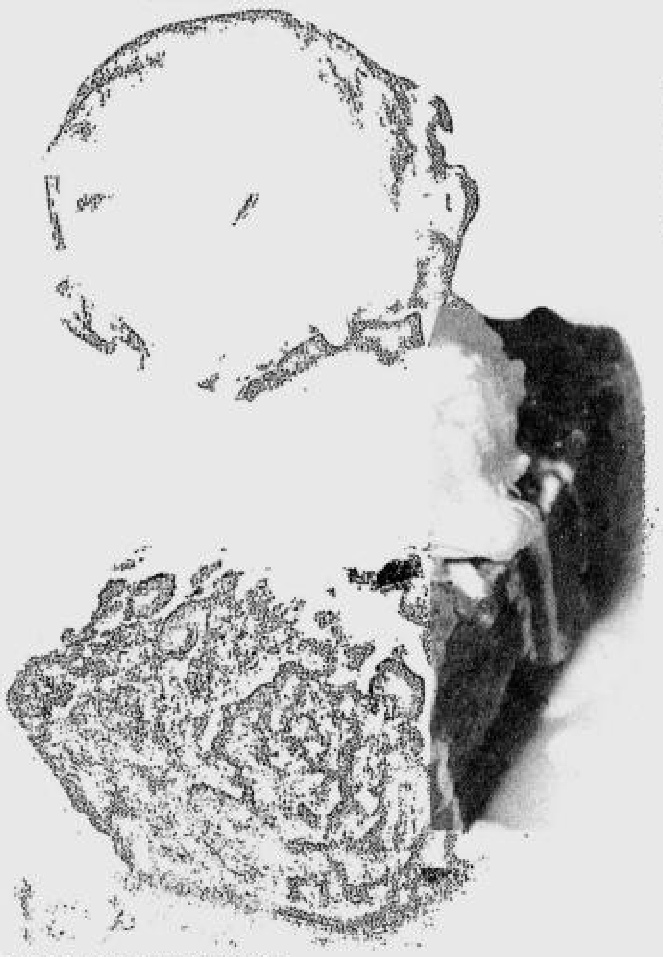


TRANSFER pudding mixture into a lightly greased baking pan, which can be round, square or rectangular in shape. Add more raisins on top.

BAKE for 20 minutes or until the top is golden brown.

A New Orleans traditional treat

STEP BY STEP



NEW Orleans Bread Pudding

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Ryan Lim

IF YOU ARE LOOKING for a lip-smacking dessert to cap a homemade meal (or to impress family, friends and significant other), the New Orleans Bread Pudding may just be the thing for you.

Though a pudding is a wonderful way to use leftover bread, for this raisin-studded, buttery pudding with bourbon-spiked sauce, fresh cut-up French bread is used and mixed with lots of walnuts and raisins.

You can also use any white bread, but this traditional New Orleans recipe calls for crusty French bread. Avoid any sandwich bread as it is too soft and will dissolve in the liquid mixture.

The French bread is cut into cubes and left out overnight to make it very dry and chewy.

"New Orleans is one of the best food 'cities in the world and it boasts of delightfully elegant and very rich desserts rooted in the Creole culinary tradition," says Albert Alavera, managing director of Gumbo Restaurant at The Block, SM North Edsa, and at the SM Mall of Asia.

New Orleans bread pudding is usually served warm and is often topped with heavy cream, ice cream or whipped cream. It is covered in a rich, sweet sauce containing a strong dose of liquor—most often bourbon. An assortment of fresh or dried fruits and nuts are also added to the pudding.

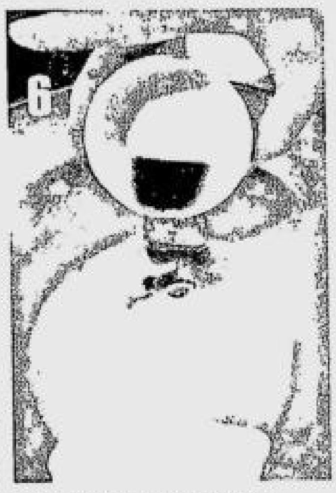
Anyone can make this traditional New Orleans recipe for bread pudding. The bread base nicely absorbs the bourbon sauce so that each bite is infused with its flavor. Soaked in milk, butter and eggs, the base also gives a soft, spongy texture to the pudding that contrasts deliciously with toppings of walnuts, pecans, macadamias, raisins or other dried fruit.

The pudding mixture should be nice and moist, not runny or dry. Taste to make sure the sauce has a thick consistency, a sufficiently sweet taste, and a good bourbon flavor.

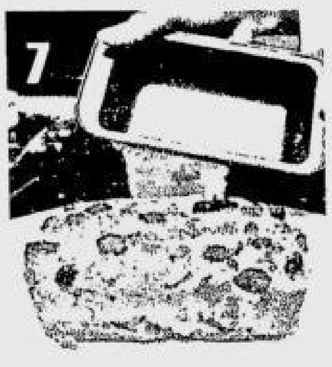
This dessert is best eaten the same day it is made.

Ingredients
75 g French bread, cut up
1/3 c butter, melted
1 c milk
½ c white sugar
1 pc whole egg
1 tbsp raisins
30 g walnuts, chopped
Bourbon whiskey sauce:
½ c all-purpose cream
½ c butter
3 tbsp white sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
½ c Bourbon whiskey

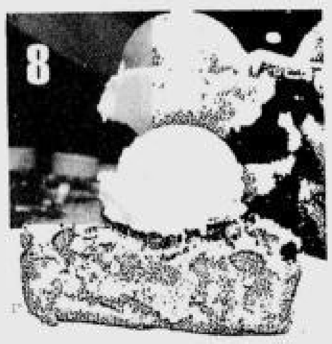
For suggestions, e-mail the author at vbaga@inquirer.com.ph



MEANWHILE, prepare the Bourbon whiskey sauce. Mix together butter, whiskey, cream, vanilla and sugar. Cook over low fire until butter mixture thickens.



REMOVE bread pudding from the oven. Transfer to a platter.



TOP with two scoops of vanilla ice cream.

SPOON sauce over ice cream and drizzle with powdered cinnamon. Serve warm.

The farmer's market cook

From page D1

miest concoctions I have tried of late.

This is my peace offering for the many recipe requests I have somehow overlooked because there had been many other interesting things to write about.

Aside from Richard's repertoire, next week I will also be sharing with you meatless recipes that are perfect for the Lenten season. And, since it is Lent, you will have to forgive me.

US Baby Back Pork Ribs

1 ½ tsp salt
1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp ground cumin seeds
½ tsp US celery seeds
2 slabs, about 1.3 kg, US baby back pork ribs
½ c US cider vinegar
¼ c US honey
Spices

- Rub spice mix into the ribs.
- Let infuse into ribs for an hour to overnight in the refrigerator.
- Preheat the oven to 300°F.
- Place ribs on a baking rack.
- Cook for 2 hours.
- Remove ribs from oven and place in a large sheet of aluminum foil.
- Drizzle ribs with vinegar and honey.
- Seal the ribs with foil.
- Continue to bake for another hour. Serve with barbecue sauce.

Spicy Bar-b-cue Sauce
2 US chipotle chile
5 black cardamom seeds
1 small onion, diced
3 garlic cloves, chopped
¼ c US tomato paste
¼ c US honey
½ c *ketjap manis*
¼ c US pomegranate syrup
1 ½ c US ketchup
1/8 cup US apple cider vinegar
2 tsp salt
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper

- Combine ingredients in a sauce pan and bring to a boil.
- Lower heat.
- Simmer for a few minutes.
- Discard cardamom seeds.
- Put sauce in a processor. Blend until smooth.

Carved US Prime Rib Eye with Wild Mushroom Sauce

1 kg US beef rib eye, prime grade, cut into about 115-g pieces
1/8 c dried porcini mushrooms
½ c brandy
4 shallots
2 tbsp unsalted butter
1 tbsp US olive oil
450 g mushrooms (such as oyster, shiitake, morels)
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 tsp thyme leaves, chopped
1 tbsp flat-leaf parsley leaves, chopped
2 tsp US tomato paste
2 c US brown veal stock
Salt and pepper to taste

- Soak dried mushrooms in brandy for 15 minutes.
- Roast the shallots wrapped in foil. Bake 350°F for 30 minutes or until shallots are soft and tender. Peel and chop.
- In a sauce pan, melt the butter along with the oil.
- Add mushrooms.
- Add garlic, thyme, parsley, tomato paste.
- Mix in dried mushrooms and brandy.
- Reduce brandy by half and add stock and shallots, salt and pepper.
- Reduce mixture down to 2 cups.
- Remove from the heat, and keep warm.
- Season the beef with salt and pepper.
- Heat a sauté pan over a high flame, and add 2 tbsp of olive oil.
- Add beef.
- Cook 3-4 minutes per side.
- Serve with sauce.

RUBEN was the featured chef at the US ambassador's wine and food pairing reception.

Rolled Stuffed US Turkey Breast

3 large onions, sliced thinly
2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp US canola oil
½ cup US pecan nuts, finely chopped
¼ cup US raisins
¼ cup flat-leaf parsley, leaves only, chopped
2 tbsp sage leaves, chopped
¼ tsp cayenne pepper
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1.8 kg boneless US turkey breast
1 c US dry white wine

- Heat sauté pan over a high flame and add the oil and butter.
- Add onions.
- Reduce to medium heat and cook until onions are dark golden brown.
- Mix in the nuts, raisins, parsley, sage, cayenne, salt and pepper to taste.
- Remove mixture from heat and cool.
- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Butterfly turkey breast.
- Spread cooled onion mixture across turkey breast leaving a ½-inch border around the edges.
- Roll turkey breast up and tie using butcher twine.
- Season turkey with salt and pepper and place on a shallow baking tray.
- Pour in white wine.
- Bake for an hour.
- Turn off the oven and let turkey rest in the oven for 10 minutes.

My new class schedules that include the summer module for kids and the gourmet *cucinera* series (for beginners and household help) are out. Call 9289296, 9273008 for details.

E-mail the author at raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

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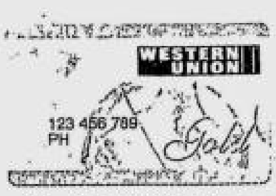

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THE CONSUMER

Receipt from BIR-registered cash machine considered official

By Linda B. Bolido

WITH THE ONGOING BUREAU of Internal Revenue promo, the weekly Premyo sa Resibo with a cash prize of P1 million, people are learning to ask for official receipts from stores, restaurants and other commercial establishments.

But reader Irene Tanzo wants to know just what constitutes an official receipt. In her e-mail, she said she wanted to know the difference between receipts stores gave customers. "They tend to vary from sales invoice, sales receipt, official receipt, to cash invoice."

She noted that the big chains were issuing sales receipts/invoice printouts from cash registers. Tanzo seemed unsure if those pieces of paper spewed by cash machines were to be considered official receipts.

Tanzo and other consumers will be happy to know that those little pieces of paper are considered as official receipts if the cash register machines (CRM) that issue them are registered with the BIR.

In a letter published in the INQUIRER's Letters section, Commissioner Jose Mario C. Buñag, responding to a query from another reader, said the "computer printout or CRM-generated tape receipt ... is for all intents and purposes considered an official receipt" if the machine is registered with the bureau.

Responding to Tanzo specifically, Robinsons, one of the major chains she mentioned in her letter, gave the assurance that their CRM were registered with the BIR.

A Robinsons' spokesperson said in her e-mail, "the BIR permit attached to the POS (point of sale terminal) or ECR (electronic cash register), states that the machine is authorized to issue receipts in lieu of sales invoice."

Robinsons' cash invoice, sales invoice and official receipts could be manually accomplished or printed from the POS.

So consumers who hesitate to join the BIR's Premyo sa Resibo raffle because they only have the tape receipt should feel reassured by these statements.

Feedback

A reader, reacting to the Feb. 22 column on banks, said he had also been a victim of the financial institutions' "unfair practices."

"I think you should warn your readers to check their monthly statement to see if their bank has automatically deducted a service fee ... or other penalties" because their accounts fell below the maintaining balance.

He said he was surprised to find that his bank deducted P100 from his account for falling below the required maintaining balance.

He said his bank's old maintaining balance for savings deposit with passbook was P1,000. But it raised it to to P5,000 in January without informing depositors.

The reader added, "I've done some research in the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas web site regarding this and, surprisingly, they have a circular dated May 2005 regarding service and maintenance fees. It was stated that 'banks should inform its depositors about changes in the terms and conditions in their deposit products at least 60 days prior to implementation.' However, it seems that the banks do not follow this BSP regulation and BSP is powerless to impose this regulations on the banks."

New scam?

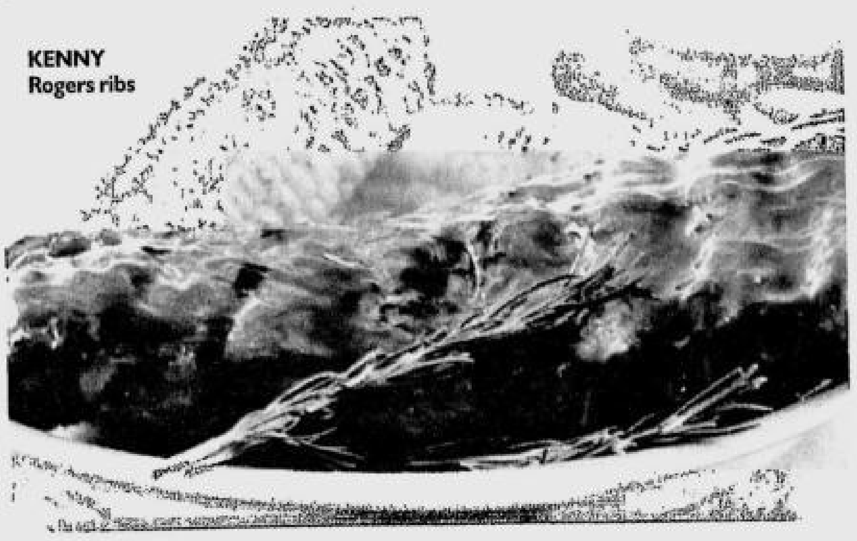
I got a call recently from people who claimed to represent a pre-need company. They were telling me I was one of 15 lucky winners of a raffle marking the 28th anniversary of their company. My prize was a certificate of insurance that I had to claim at their office.

To make themselves more credible, they even told me the president of the company himself, mentioning the name of someone who seemed to be a well-respected and well-known member of the insurance industry, drew the winning numbers.

I asked what I did to deserve the good fortune and what was expected of me. They assured me repeatedly there was nothing to buy and no seminars to attend.

Still such good fortune do not just fall on your lap for nothing so I asked somebody whose office just happened to be in the same building to check out the company. The office was there all right but nobody has heard of the promo or the people who called me.

So I am still wondering what it was all about.



KENNY Rogers ribs

Not just about chicken

KENNY Rogers roast chicken sandwich

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It is still the place to go when you crave succulent roasted chicken, cooked home-style (in Classic and Inasal flavors), ribs, muffins and a wide selection of side dishes (12 in total), but the restaurant has expanded its menu to meet the different preferences of its market.

Also included in its menu are melt-in-the-mouth Honey Bourbon Ribs and Krispy Fried Chicken. Other fresh options are salads that are light yet packed with flavor and freshness. For snacks, there are six unique sandwiches prepared with its delicious signature bread roll.

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OB-Gynecologist Dr. Ma. Cecilia Gilbuela-Vicencio enlightens us regarding Pap smear. Dr. Cecille, a medicine graduate of UERMMC, has a sub-specialty in OB-Gynecology Ultrasound. She is member of the San Juan Medical Society, Philippine Climacteric Society, and a Life time member of the Philippine Medical Association. She is also a fellow of the Philippine Society of OB-Gynecology and Philippine Society of Ultrasound in OB-Gynecology. Dr. Cecille is married to Mr.Galahad, a businessman and is blessed with two children, Solomon and Carlo Angelo. She spends her free time ballroom dancing, bar hopping and Painting. She is also into Photography. MEDICard members may visit her for consultations at The Medical City from Monday to Saturday 9-2pm and Tuesday 10-2pm.

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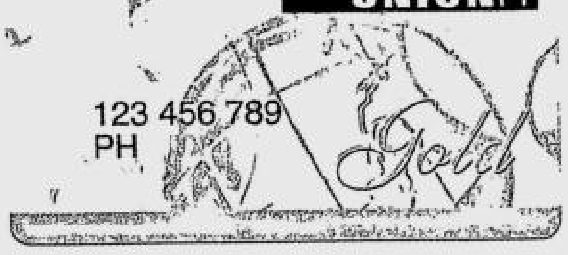

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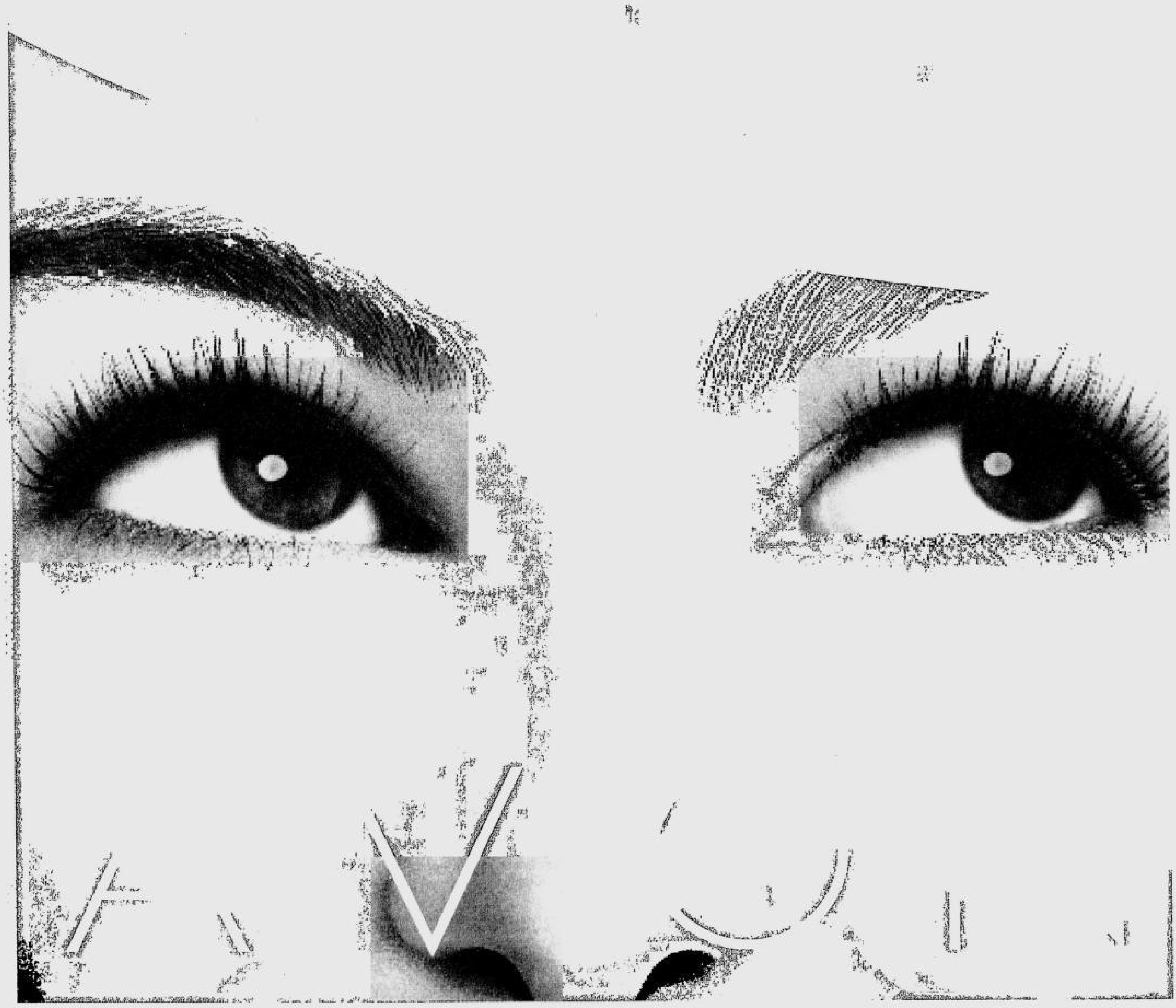

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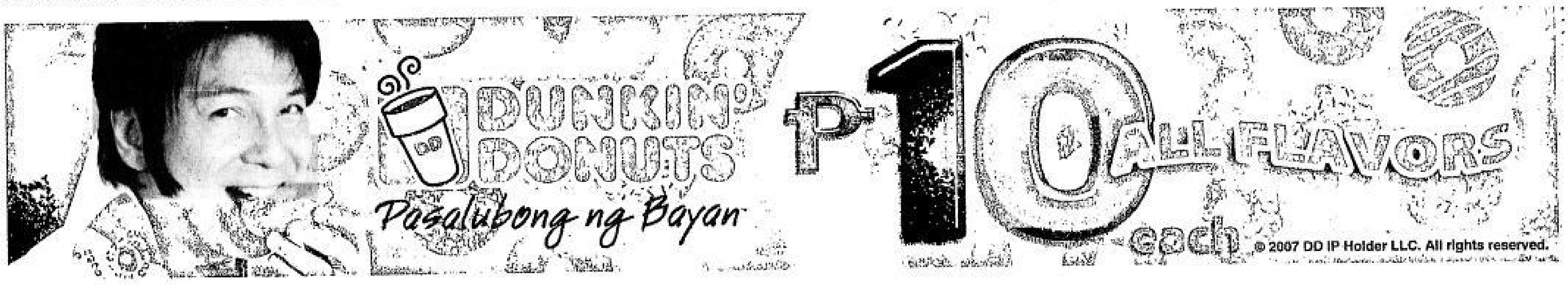
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AJ: I wasn't booted because I was Asian

By Kathryn Fatima Reyes

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

AJ TABALDO, THE FOURTH FIL-AM to make it to Hollywood via "American Idol," the No. 1 reality-TV talent show in the world, doesn't think his being Asian had anything do with his early elimination.

AJ, who was booted last week, told INQUIRER Entertainment in a conference call: "It is both a singing and a popularity competition...that America enjoys. I don't think my being Filipino had a bearing on why I got cut."

The California-based artist who "eats Filipino food all the time" pointed out that there had been many Asians on the show before. The three other Fil-Ams in previous seasons were Jasmine Trias and Camile Velasco in 2004 and Jose "Sway" Penala last year.

When told he wouldn't have been sent home so quickly, had viewer voting been allowed in the Philippines, the 22-year-old exclaimed, "Oh... Thank you! That makes me feel a lot better."

AJ's dad is half-Filipino and his mom, "full-blooded." He said many relatives spoke fluent Tagalog and Ilocano.

Also voted off from the show last Thursday (Friday in Manila) were Alaina Alexander, 24, Leslie Hunt, 24 and Nick Pedro, 25.

AJ TABALDO

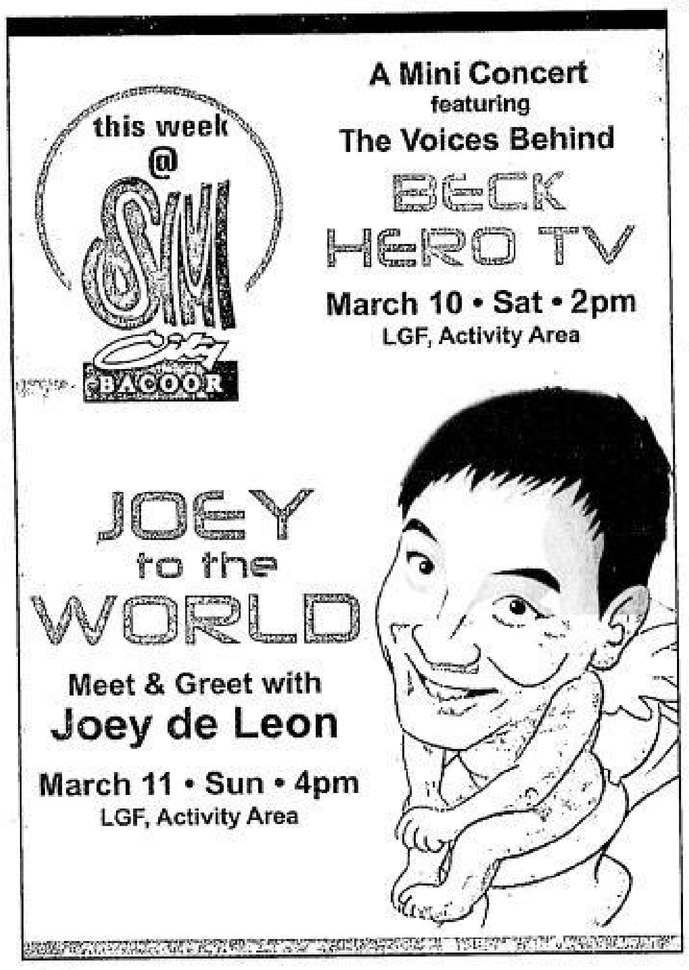
What do you think of your song choice?

It got good reviews from the judges, didn't go

AJ/ E3

HUMAN FORMS

COMICS enthusiasts who have seen "300" the movie may be surprised to find that the valiant Spartan Leonidas and his adversary, Xerxes, god-king of Persia, have 3-D human forms—actors Gerard Butler, left, from Britain and Rodrigo Santoro from Brazil, both shown here at the film's Hollywood premiere last weekend. REUTERS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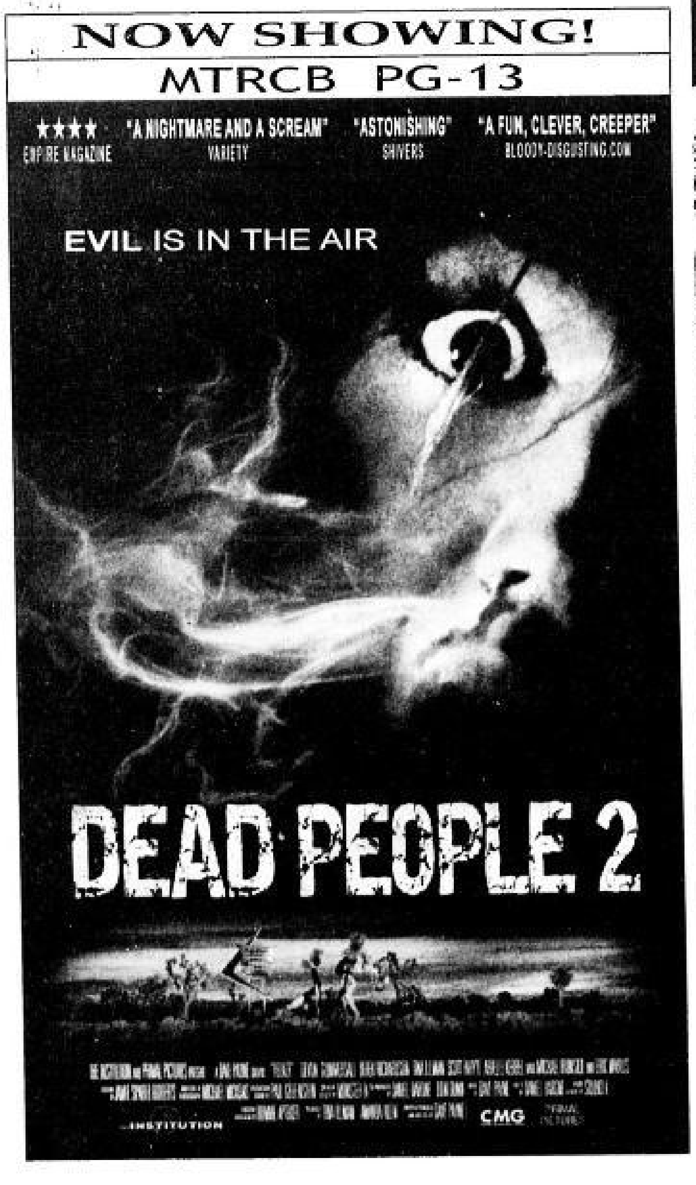
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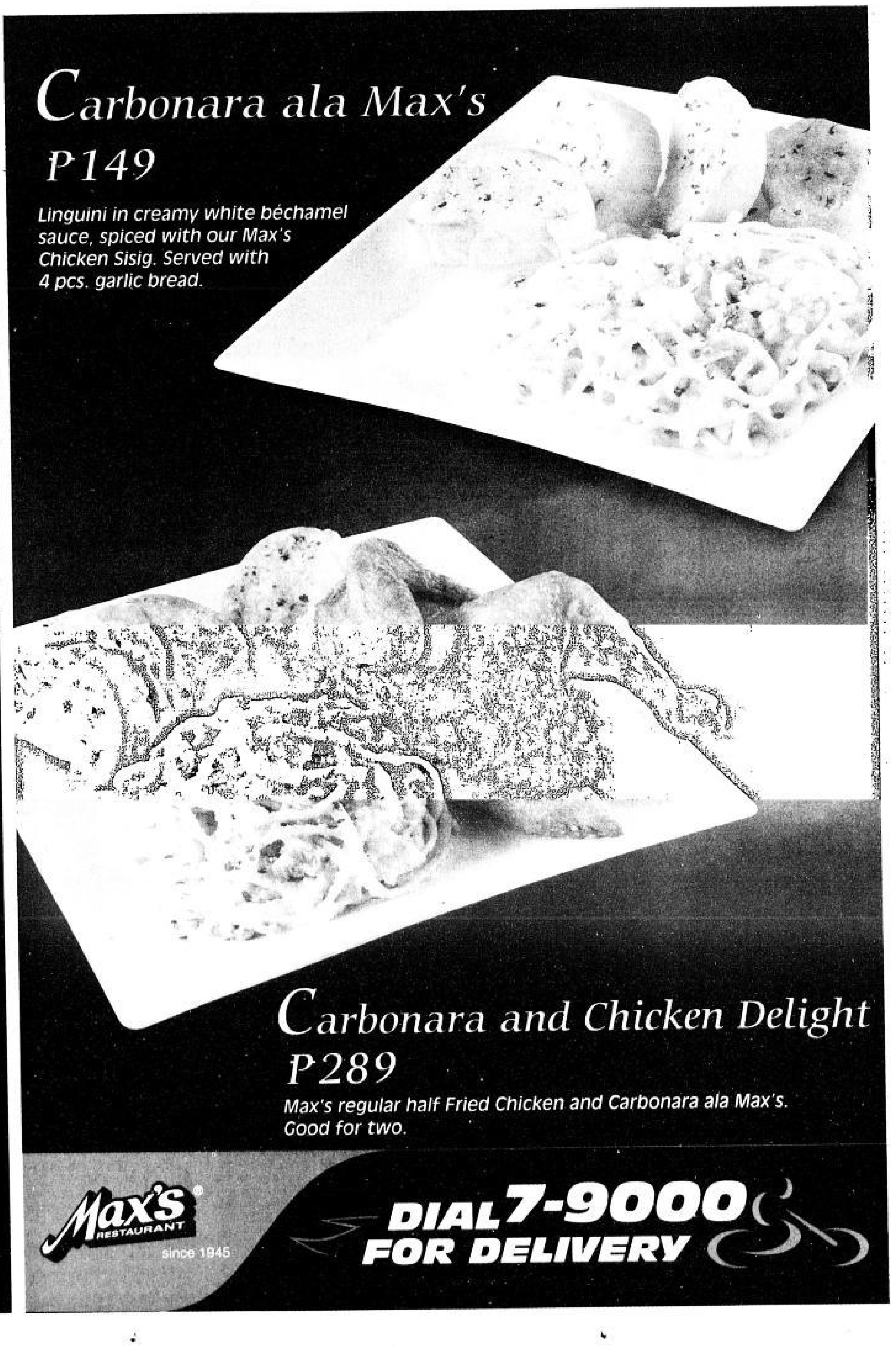
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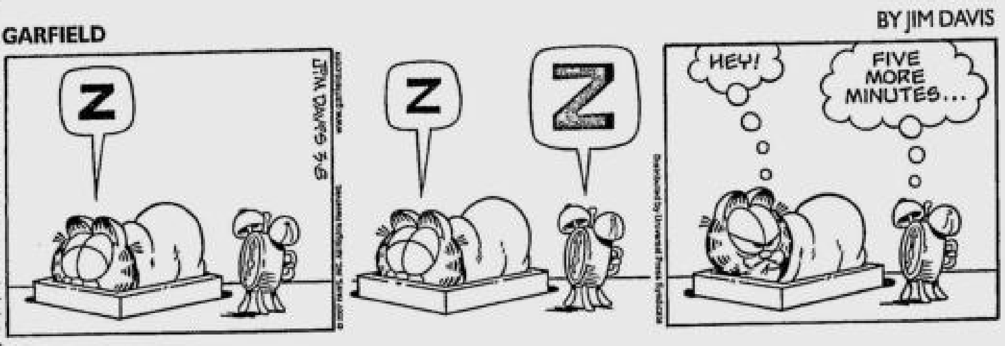
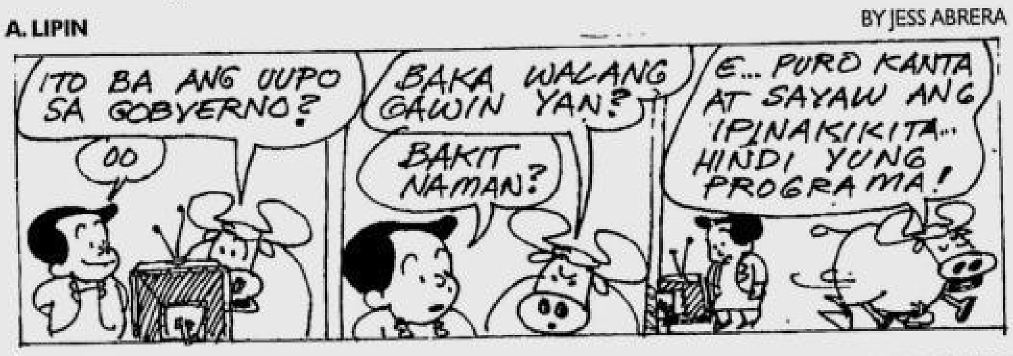
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


Z
Z
Z
HEY!
FIVE MORE MINUTES...

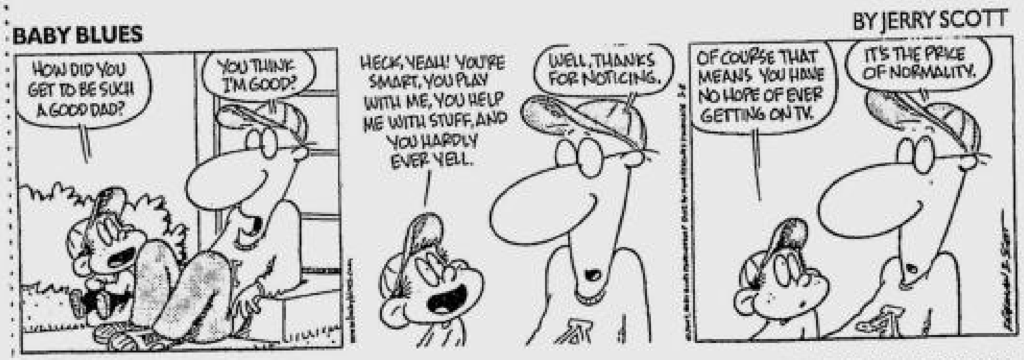
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


ITO BA ANG UUPO SA GOBYERNO?
OO
BAKA WALANG GAWIN YAN?
BAKIT NAMAN?
E... PURO KANTA AT SAYAW ANG IPINAKIKITA... HINDI YUNG PROGRAMA!

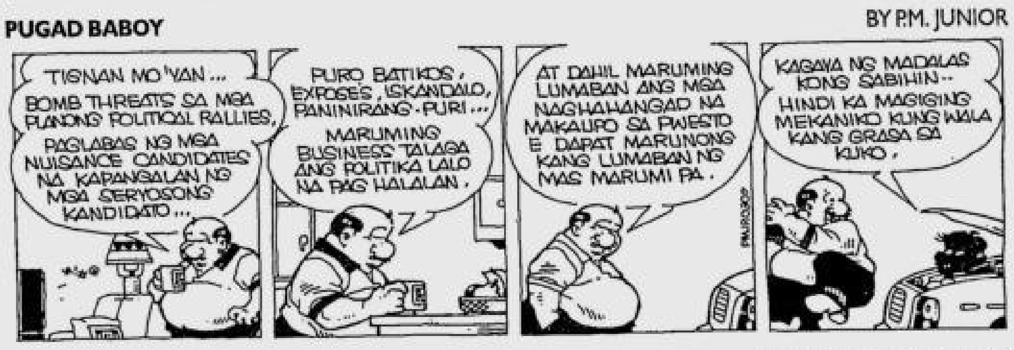
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HOW DID YOU GET TO BE SUCH A GOOD DAD?
YOU THINK I'M GOOD?
HECK, YEAH! YOU'RE SMART, YOU PLAY WITH ME, YOU HELP ME WITH STUFF, AND YOU HARDLY EVER YELL.
WELL, THANKS FOR NOTICING.
OF COURSE THAT MEANS YOU HAVE NO HOPE OF EVER GETTING ON TV.
IT'S THE PRICE OF NORMALITY.

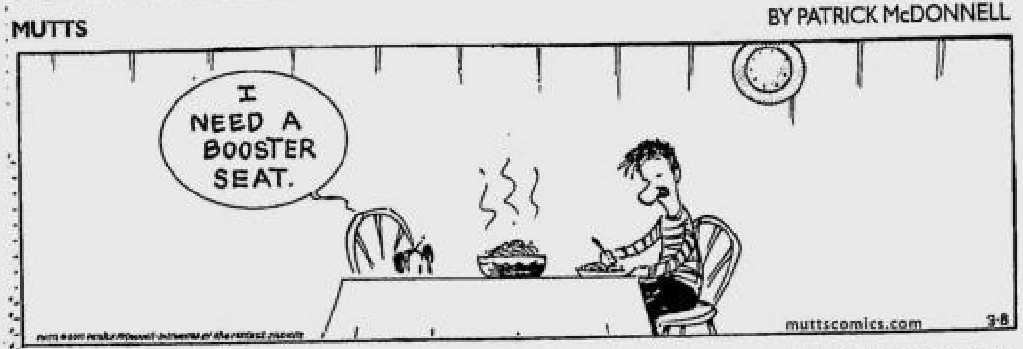
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


TIGNAN MO 'YAN ...
BOMB THREATS SA MGA PLANONG POLITICAL RALLIES,
PAGLABAS NG MGA NUISANCE CANDIDATES NA KAPANGALAN NG MGA SERYOSONG KANDIDATO ...
PURO BATIKOS, EXPOSÉS, ISKANDALO, PANINIRANG-PURI ...
MARUMING BUSINESS TALAGA ANG POLITIKA LALO NA PAG HALALAN.
AT DAHIL MARUMING LUMABAN ANG MGA NAGHAHANGAD NA MAKAUPO SA PWESTO E DAPAT MARUNONG KANG LUMABAN NG MAS MARUMI PA.
KAGAYA NG MADALAS KONG SABIHIN-- HINDI KA MAGIGING MEKANIKO KUNG WALA KANG GRASA SA KUKO.

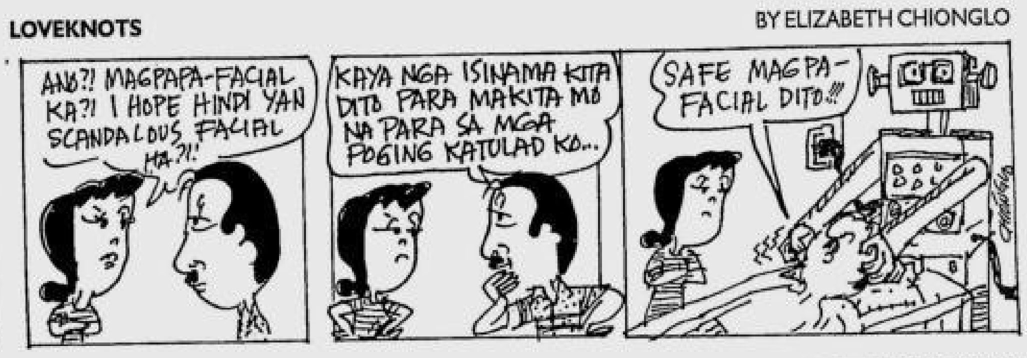
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


I NEED A BOOSTER SEAT.
muttscomics.com
3-8

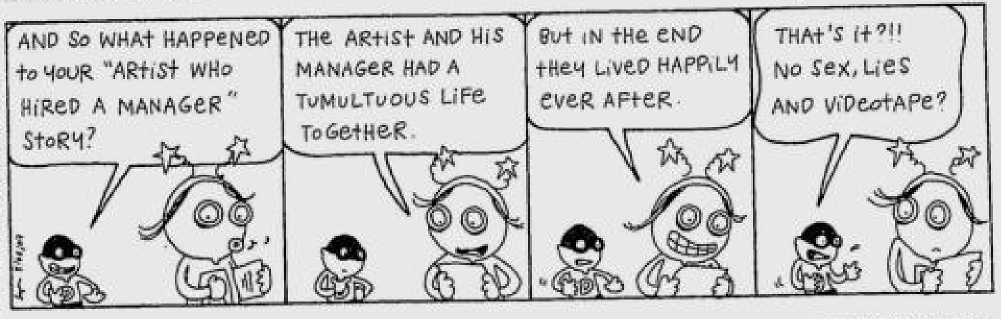
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANO?! MAGPAPA-FACIAL KA?! I HOPE HINDI YAN SCANDALOUS FACIAL HA?!
KAYA NGA ISINAMA KITA DITO PARA MAKITA MO NA PARA SA MGA POGING KATULAD KO...
SAFE MAGPA-FACIAL DITO!!!

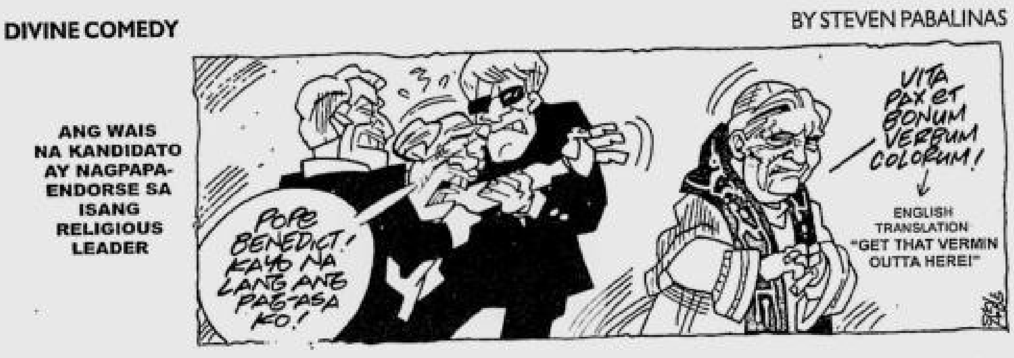
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


AND SO WHAT HAPPENED to YOUR "ARTIST WHO HIRED A MANAGER" STORY?
THE ARTIST AND HIS MANAGER HAD A TUMULTUOUS LIFE TOGETHER.
BUT IN THE END THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.
THAT'S IT?!! NO SEX, LIES AND VIDEOTAPE?

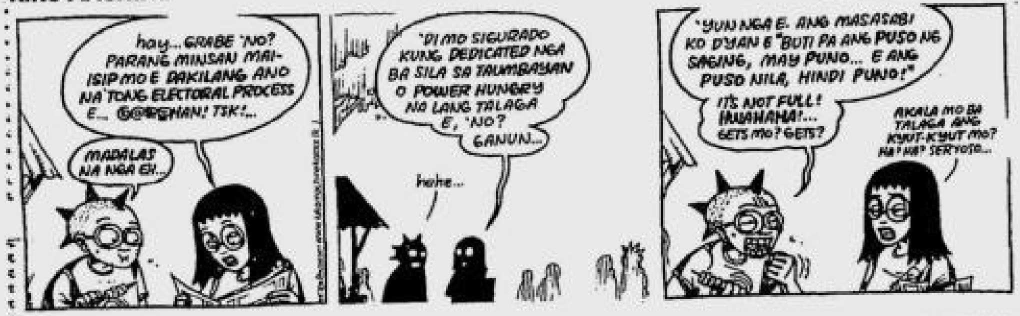
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ANG WAIS NA KANDIDATO AY NAGPAPA-ENDORSE SA ISANG RELIGIOUS LEADER
POPE BENEDICT! KAYO NA LANG ANG PAG-ASA KO!
VITA PAX ET BONUM VERBUM COLORUM!
ENGLISH TRANSLATION "GET THAT VERMIN OUTTA HERE!"

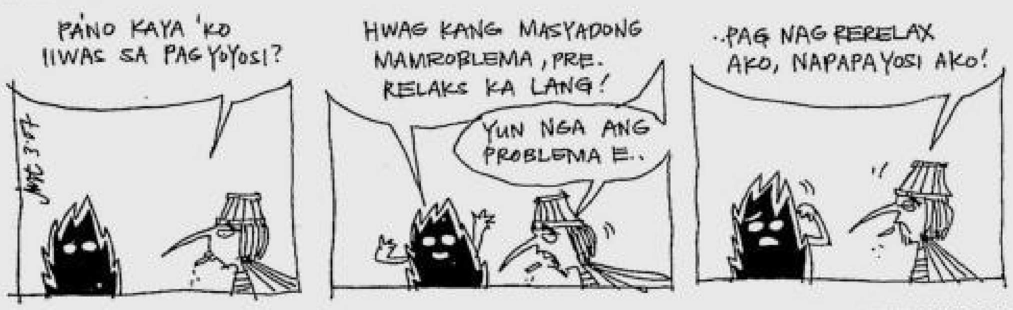
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


hay... GRABE 'NO? PARANG MINSAN MAI-ISIP MO E DAKILANG ANO NA'TONG ELECTORAL PROCESS E... @@#&HAN! TSK!...
MADALAS NA NGA EH...
"DI MO SIGURADO KUNG DEDICATED NGA BA SILA SA TAUMBAYAN O POWER HUNGRY NA LANG TALAGA E, 'NO? GANUN...
hehe...
"YUN NGA E. ANG MASASABI KO D'YAN E "BUTI PA ANG PUSO NG SAGING, MAY PUNO... E ANG PUSO NILA, HINDI PUNO!"
IT'S NOT FULL! WAHAHA!... GETS MO? GETS?
AKALA MO BA TALAGA ANG KYUT-KYUT MO? HA? HA? SERYOSO...

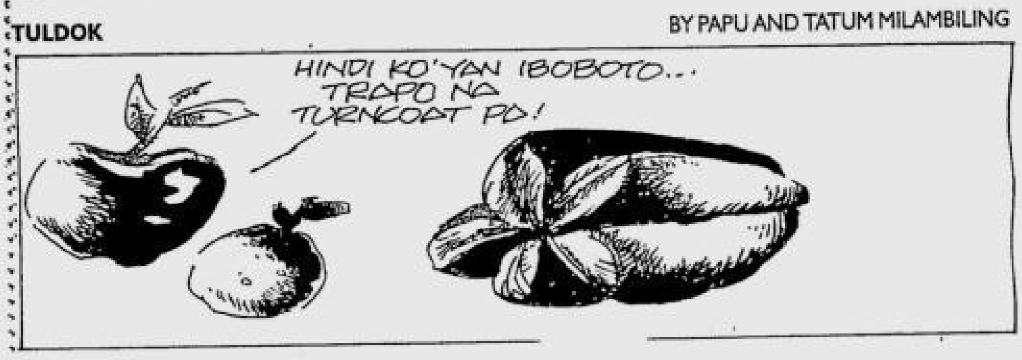
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PANO KAYA 'KO IIWAS SA PAGYOYOSI?
HWAG KANG MASYADONG MAMROBLEMA, PRE. RELAKS KA LANG!
YUN NGA ANG PROBLEMA E..
..PAG NAG RERELAX AKO, NAPAPAYOSI AKO!

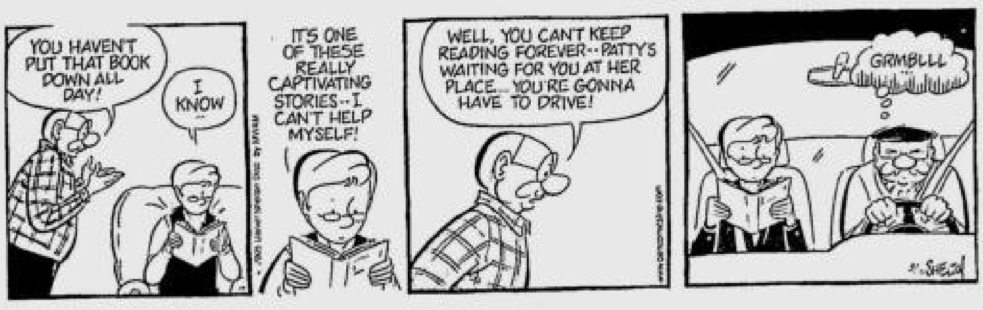
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

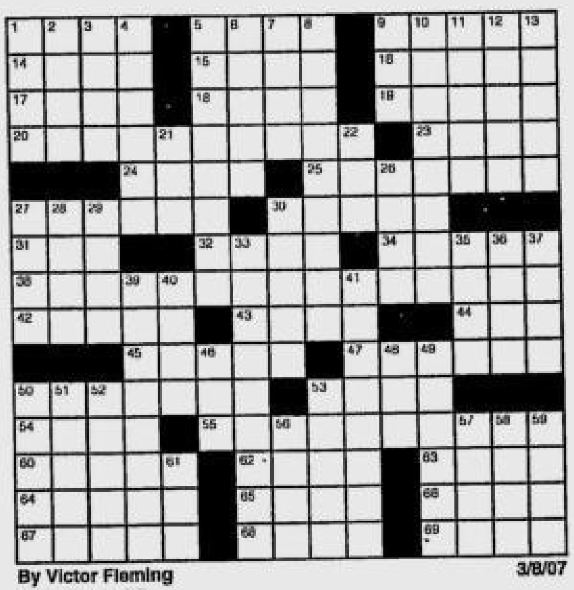

HINDI KO 'YAN IBOBOTO... TRAPO NA TURNCOAT PO!

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


YOU HAVEN'T PUT THAT BOOK DOWN ALL DAY!
I KNOW
IT'S ONE OF THESE REALLY CAPTIVATING STORIES-- I CAN'T HELP MYSELF!
WELL, YOU CAN'T KEEP READING FOREVER-- PATTY'S WAITING FOR YOU AT HER PLACE... YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO DRIVE!
GRMBLLL

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Victor Fleming
Little Rock, AR

3/8/07

ACROSS
1 Tennis units
5 Harrow part
9 Hollywood idol?
14 Golfer Aoki
15 A fan of
16 Author of "The Trip to Bountiful"
17 Handle roughly
18 Border against
19 "__ Bulba"
20 Start of a quip
23 Actress Gilpin
24 "Das Kapital" writer
25 Treat with contempt
27 Chastain of soccer
30 __ Lama
31 Actor Brynner
32 "Caruso" singer Joan
34 Camera setting
38 Part 2 of quip
42 Tennessee __ Ford
43 New currency abroad
44 "Norma __"
45 Pester persistently
47 Ability to remember
50 Hereditary
53 Arizona river
54 Construction piece
55 End of quip
60 __ c'est moi
62 Adverse fate
63 Weighty volume
64 Serious play
65 Exxon, formerly
66 "The __ Ranger"
67 Book of maps
68 Wise off
69 Writer Bagnold

DOWN
1 __ Valley, CA
2 Biblical twin
3 Greek letters
4 Gravely impressive
5 Abusive denunciation
6 Desk tray
7 Ticket piece
8 Resort area of France
9 Frequently in a poem
10 Kline/Field movie
11 Chick of jazz
12 Space Invaders company
13 Viscous substance
21 Family guy
22 Be ill
26 Moroccan seaport
27 Memory unit
28 One who's sorry now
29 Actor Alda
30 Coming-out
33 Some three-digit numbers
35 Neighbor of Twelve Oaks
36 Cameo shape
37 Banana wrap?
39 Wide-screen process
40 Furnace output
41 "Silent All These Years" singer
46 Cotton cleaner
48 Golfer Ernie
49 Elsinore or Balmoral
50 Comic Radner
51 Roeper's partner
52 Birth-related
53 Lip cosmetic
56 La __ Nostra
57 12 o'clock high
58 Potent starter?
59 Garden invader
61 Isl. off Australia

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

L	E	A	K	■	S	A	N	E	■	C	A	S	T	S
A	R	N	O	■	A	P	E	R	■	O	S	H	E	A
B	L	O	W	Y	O	U	R	O	W	N	H	O	R	N
S	E	A	T	O	■	■	O	T	I	C	■	O	N	T
■	■	■	O	U	C	H	■	I	N	E	R	T	I	A
K	N	O	W	T	H	E	S	C	O	R	E	■	■	■
E	E	G	■	H	E	R	E	■	■	T	E	N	O	R
Y	S	E	R	■	R	O	N	A	S	■	L	I	M	O
S	T	E	I	N	■	■	A	C	E	S	■	T	N	T
■	■	■	F	A	C	E	T	H	E	M	U	S	I	C
T	O	R	E	R	O	S	■	E	D	E	N	■	■	■
A	V	E	■	R	I	T	A	■	■	A	D	E	L	E
P	U	L	L	A	F	E	W	S	T	R	I	N	G	S
E	L	I	O	T	■	E	R	I	E	■	E	T	E	S
S	E	T	T	E	■	M	Y	R	A	■	S	O	S	O

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3/8/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a traditionalist, yet you insist on doing things your own way. Because you have a great zest for life, you're not afraid to take on major (sometimes daunting) projects. Others easily like you. You often choose a role in life and play it to the hilt. In the year ahead, you will focus on your closest partnerships and friendships.

Birthdate of: Camryn Manheim, actress; Larry Murphy, hockey player; James Van Der Beek, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a great day to make travel plans or explore educational opportunities or further training in any field. Expect a breakthrough in these areas.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might discover that your partner got a raise or a bonus. In some way, gifts, goodies and favors will definitely come to you today, either directly or indirectly. Lucky you!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a marvelous day to schmooze with friends, groups, clubs and organizations. Accept all invitations. Enjoy fun times with others.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You can definitely promote your good name today. Discussions with bosses, parents and VIPs will go extremely well. People are impressed by you!

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Publishing, the media, travel and areas related to education are all beautifully blessed today. Make whatever headway you can.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): There's a strong likelihood that gifts, goodies, cash or direct favors will come your way today. Somehow, you stand to benefit from the universe. Don't question things. Just say thank you!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Your relations with others, especially partners and close friends, are friendly, warm and cozy today. People are delighted to see you. They're actually thrilled to share your company or be in your presence.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Make the most of things at work today. Co-workers will be helpful. In fact, you might get praise, a raise or some kind of promotion. (Fingers crossed.)

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is an excellent day for financial speculation. It's also a wonderful day for love affairs, romance, working with children and just having fun. Wheee!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Buy something beautiful for your home or for a family member today. Any kind of redecorating will please you. Family gatherings will be rewarding.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): It's hard to find a better day to sign contracts or enter into negotiations with others. Shopping, buying and selling, plus short trips will delight you today.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your ability to earn money and spend it is nicely blessed today. Be open to financial negotiations. An opportunity awaits somewhere for you. Don't be afraid to go after what you want, especially in terms of money and how to earn it or spend it. Ka-ching!

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

6	1							
		3	5					
				3	9	8		
		7	1					
2	4						6	5
					6	2		
		5	6	7				
					2	1		
							4	3

Difficulty Level ★★★

3/08

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

2	5	4	9	7	6	1	3	8
7	9	1	4	8	3	2	6	5
6	3	8	2	5	1	7	4	9
4	1	6	7	2	5	8	9	3
9	2	3	1	6	8	5	7	4
8	7	5	3	4	9	6	1	2
5	8	9	6	3	7	4	2	1
3	6	2	5	1	4	9	8	7
1	4	7	8	9	2	3	5	6

Difficulty Level ★★★

ALAINA ALEXANDER

NICK PEDRO

LESLIE HUNT

AJ: I wasn't…

From page E1

over well with America, unfortunately, but I'm happy with it.

Were you surprised that that you were voted out?

I was definitely shocked, but that's the name of the game. I felt like I went out with a bang, versus going out on a week when the judges said I sucked.

Do you think you're a better singer than some of those left in the tilt?

There are some big contenders this year. But based on what the judges said, I feel like I was up there with the better ones. No one can predict how America votes.

Some analysts say the reason you had to leave was, you didn't develop a big enough fan base.

That's partly true. Some [contestants] got to create larger fan bases on account of early exposure via a little background feature. In that way, I feel I was a little under-advantaged, but I'm very proud that I got this far based on talent alone.

Did you know that Jasmine Trias was able to start a career here in the Philippines?

I would love to travel abroad and be successful in other parts of the world, especially the Philippines. That would be great, yes.

ALAINA ALEXANDER

How hard is it to sing when you've just been eliminated?

Really hard. I truly felt okay until I think I looked at someone who might have been crying, and it was downhill from there.

What are your plans?

I'll just put myself out there.

NICK PEDRO

Any ideas on why you were eliminated?

Not enough people voted. Or maybe they thought I was safe, since I got good comments.

Who were you looking forward to working with the most, of all of the guest artists that they had lined up?

Tony Bennett.

LESLIE HUNT

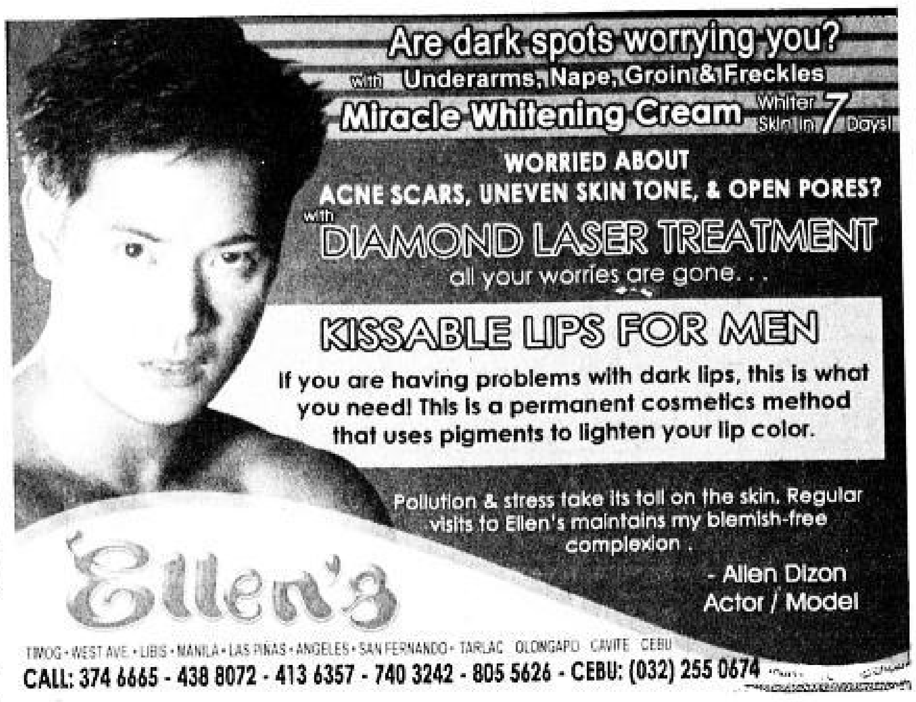
Why do you think you were eliminated?

I have no idea.

What are your plans?

It depends on what comes knocking.

"American Idol" airs on Star World Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 6 p.m. live via satellite, with replays at 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.


Are dark spots worrying you?
with Underarms, Nape, Groin & Freckles
Miracle Whitening Cream Whiter Skin in 7 Days!
WORRIED ABOUT ACNE SCARS, UNEVEN SKIN TONE, & OPEN PORES?
with DIAMOND LASER TREATMENT
all your worries are gone. . .
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If you are having problems with dark lips, this is what you need! This is a permanent cosmetics method that uses pigments to lighten your lip color.
Pollution & stress take its toll on the skin. Regular visits to Ellen's maintains my blemish-free complexion.
- Allen Dizon
Actor / Model
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CALL: 374 6665 - 438 8072 - 413 6357 - 740 3242 - 805 5626 - CEBU: (032) 255 0674

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE REPORTED MISSING ON INTERSTATES ANNUALLY...
LESS THAN 1% ARE FOUND ALIVE.
WARNING
REMEMBER THESE SAFETY TIPS:
- Notify friends / family when you expect to arrive.
- Plan your route carefully.
- Always carry a First Aid Kit.
- Stop only at well lighted locations.
- Don't pick-up Strangers.
- For more info visit www.neverpickupstrangers.com

NOW SHOWING
MTRCB RATING R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND UP
From the Producers of "THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE" and "THE AMITYVILLE HORROR"
THE HITCHER
WWW.NEVERPICKUPSTRANGERS.COM
The Austin
Never Pick Up Str

MTRCB RATING PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult
kevin zegers samaire armstrong sharon osbourne
it's a boygirl thing
He's the hottest jock.
She's the biggest nerd.
They're sworn enemies.
And they've just switched bodies.
NOW SHOWING
A Mel Gibson Production

GREENHILLS CINEMAS
GREENHILLS SHOPPING CENTER, ORTIGAS AVENUE, GREENHILLS, SAN JUAN, METRO MANILA
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a landmark reinvented!
NOW SHOWING
CINEMA 1 THE HITCHER 11:40, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:25, 10:35 R-13
CINEMA 2 300 10:30, 1:20, 4:10, 7:00, 9:50 R-13
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX
PROMENADE GREENHILLS
...a dinertainment for all!
NOW SHOWING
CINEMA 3 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS 11:15, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 PG-13
CINEMA 4 A GOOD SHEPHERD 12:45, 4:10, 7:25, 10:35 R-13
CINEMA 5 300 11:10, 2:00, 4:50, 7:40, 10:30 R-13
TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

MUSIC MUSEUM
| March 16 & 23, 2007 | SITTI... IN LOVE | 8:30 PM |
| March 30, 2007 | [illegible] | 8:00 PM |

TEATRINO PROMENADE GREENHILLS
EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00 PM
March 9, 2007	DAVE	8:30 PM
March 10, 2007	JOHN LESACA	8:00 PM
March 15, 22, 29, 2007	RAYMUND LAUCHENGCO	8:30 PM

FOR INQUIRIES PLS. CALL 722-4532 LOC 116.

glorietta GREENBELT ALABANG TOWN AYALA CENTER CEBU MARKET! MARKET! Ayala Malls

AT THE CINEMAS
THX
Reserve your tickets by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations
Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification, please call 729 7777

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
G1 GLORIETTA 1	IT'S A BOY GIRL THING	300	THE HITCHER	YOU GOT ME			
G4 GLORIETTA 4	THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	YOU GOT ME	THX 300 GUARANTEED SEATS	THE HITCHER	NOTES ON A SCANDAL	THE GOOD SHEPHERD	EPIC MOVIE
GB1 GREENBELT 1	THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	300					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	THX THE GOOD SHEPHERD GUARANTEED SEATS	THX 300 GUARANTEED SEATS	NOTES ON A SCANDAL GUARANTEED SEATS	300 GUARANTEED SEATS	THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THX 300 GUARANTEED SEATS	THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	THE GOOD SHEPHERD	YOU GOT ME	THE HITCHER		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	300	THE HITCHER	IT'S A BOY GIRL THING	YOU GOT ME			
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	300	THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	THE GOOD SHEPHERD	THE HITCHER	YOU GOT ME		

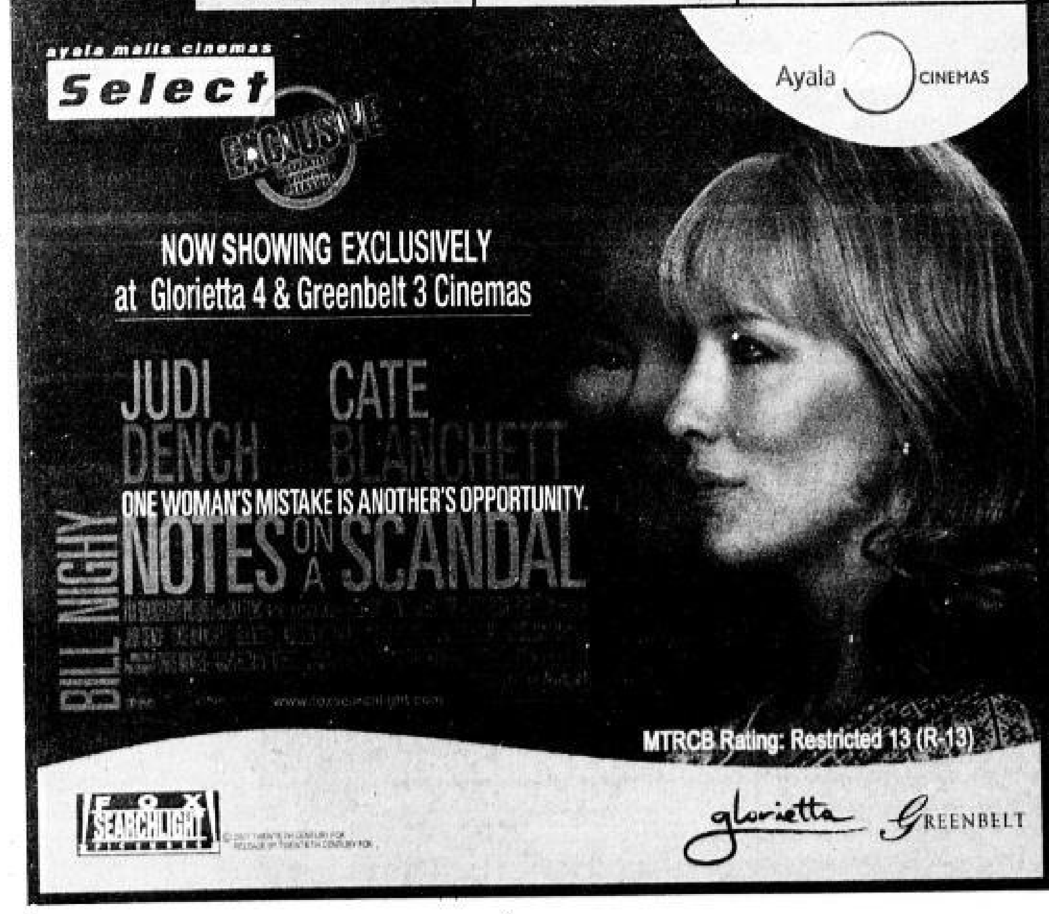
At the Activity Center
Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service Numbers: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 9pm
Greenbelt - 757 4853; from 11am to 9pm
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519

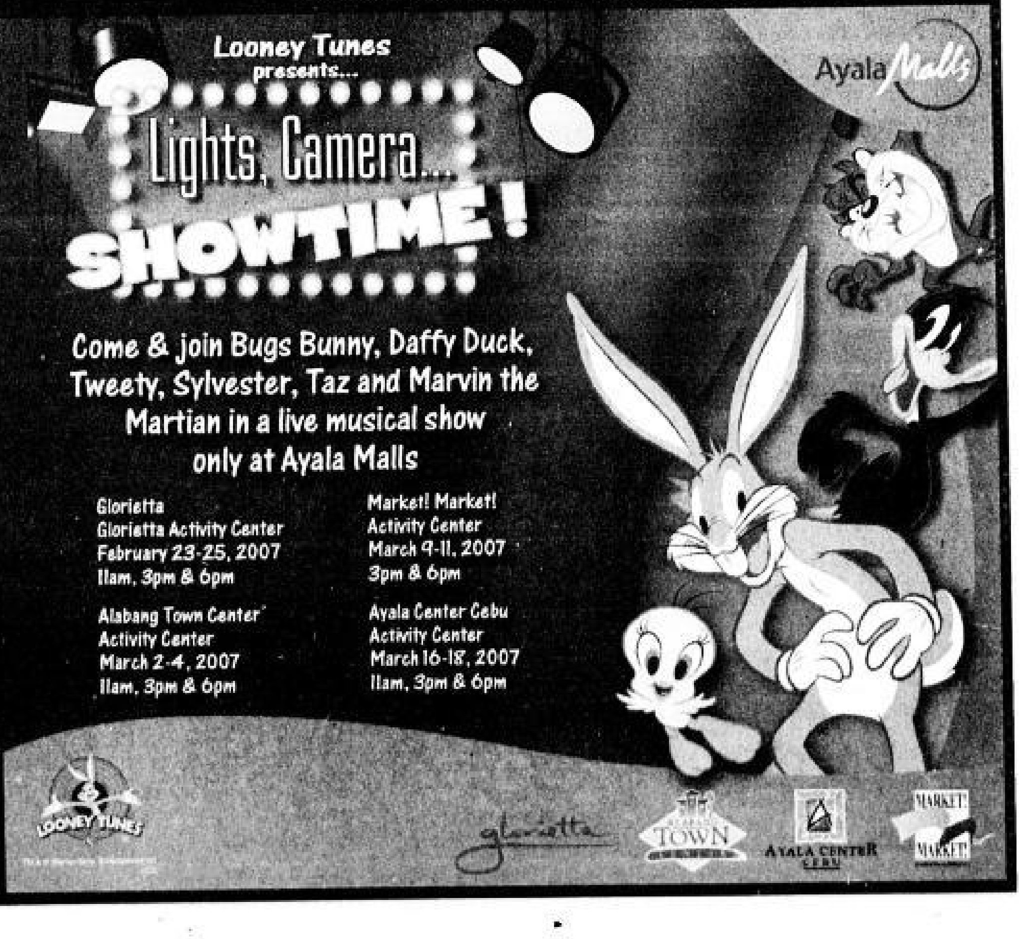
GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER
BPI Express Credit Installment Madness February 28 to March 18, 2007	Anson's Exhibit March 5 to 23, 2007
AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Looney Tunes presents Lights, Camera... Showtime! March 16 to 18, 2007	Looney Tunes presents Lights, Camera... Showtime! March 9 to 11, 2007

GREENBELT
Greenbelt 5 Sneak Peek presents Collection of Lila Almario
March 7 to 18, 2007

Greenbelt Onstage
Repertory Philippines presents GAY BIRDS
at REP's Globe Theater - March 16 to April 1, 2007
For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710

Ayala MUSEUM
CHINESE DIASPORA: Art Streams from the Mainland (six shows)
February 15 to March 27, 2007
For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org


ayala malls cinemas Select
EXCLUSIVE
Ayala CINEMAS
NOW SHOWING EXCLUSIVELY
at Glorietta 4 & Greenbelt 3 Cinemas
JUDI DENCH CATE BLANCHETT
ONE WOMAN'S MISTAKE IS ANOTHER'S OPPORTUNITY.
BILL NIGHY
NOTES ON A SCANDAL
MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)
FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES
glorietta GREENBELT


Looney Tunes presents...
Lights, Camera... SHOWTIME!
Ayala Malls
Come & join Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tweety, Sylvester, Taz and Marvin the Martian in a live musical show only at Ayala Malls

Glorietta
Glorietta Activity Center
February 23-25, 2007
11am, 3pm & 6pm

Alabang Town Center
Activity Center
March 2-4, 2007
11am, 3pm & 6pm

Market! Market!
Activity Center
March 9-11, 2007
3pm & 6pm

Ayala Center Cebu
Activity Center
March 16-18, 2007
11am, 3pm & 6pm

LOONEY TUNES glorietta ALABANG TOWN AYALA CENTER CEBU MARKET! MARKET!

Box office top ten

Domestic revenues, March 2-4

Touchstone Pictures

Rank • Film • Weekend gross (millions)
Gross to date • Weeks in release • Theaters

Rank	Film	Weekend gross (millions)	Gross to date	Weeks in release	Theaters
1.	Wild Hogs	$39.7	$39.7	1	3,287
2.	Zodiac	$13.4	$13.4	1	2,362
3.	Ghost Rider	$11.6	$94.8	3	3,608
4.	Bridge to Terabithia	$8.9	$58.2	3	3,159
5.	The Number 23	$6.5	$24.1	2	2,759
6.	Norbit	$6.4	$82.9	4	2,827
7.	Music & Lyrics	$4.9	$38.7	3	2,644
8.	Black Snake Moan	$4.1	$4.1	1	1,252
9.	Reno 911!: Miami	$3.9	$16.6	2	2,702
10.	Breach	$3.6	$25.6	3	1,498

SOURCE: Media By Numbers, LLC AP

Cinematic paean to eternal love

From page E6

What's going on here? The linchpin between the queen and the iconic tree is provided by the present-day character of Izzi, again played by Weisz. She is married to a brilliant scientist (Jackman) who is famous for discovering new cures for cancer.

Alas, the otherwise pluperfect Izzi herself has been stricken with a rare form of the dreaded disease, and this compels Jackman's character to redouble his efforts to find a cure.

Tying up with the main story's other key threads, that cure turns out to be derived from the bark of the Tree of Life. And it does make even the most virulent cancer cells go into remission. Tragically, however, Izzi isn't able to take advantage of the new cure, and Jackman is inconsolable.

Happily, Izzi herself provides a ray of hope when she opts to be buried, not in a cold metal coffin, but in the earth on a friend's farm. Taking her cue from the story of another friend, her hope is that her remains will enable a seed to sprout, and eventually grow into a tree, thus enabling her to "live" again, albeit in another form.—That tree motif, again.

But Jackman himself goes way beyond even that unusual denouement. His love is so strong that it makes possible his outer-space apotheosis centuries later, during which his love not only survives through future time, but is further spiritually distilled into the essence of love itself.

This is, of course, the height of cinematic fancy, taking the production into the realm of Eastern mysticism—an excessively far-out over-reaching that could turn off some people.

Short of that, however, the film otherwise works, because its leads' focused and intense performers humanize the film's hyper-cinematic conceits and occasionally over-arty visual and thematic flourishes.

Yes, love can last a lifetime, and possibly even beyond that, even without fantasticating, mystical divertissements thrown in for superfluous measure!

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3 THE HITCHER
4 DEAD PEOPLE 2
5 THE GOOD SHEPHERD
6 SAAN NAGTATAGO SI HAPPINESS
PREMIERE CINEMA
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CINEMA 1
300
CINEMA 2
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4 NUMBER 23
5 THE HITCHER
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7 DEAD PEOPLE 2
8 YOU GOT ME
9 PRIMEVAL
10 THE PROMISE
11 300
12 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901
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2 THE HITCHER
3 300
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5 PRIMEVAL
6 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
7 EPIC MOVIE
8 MUSIC AND LYRICS
9 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
10 YOU GOT ME
11 DEAD PEOPLE 2
12 SAAN NAGTATAGO SI HAPPINESS

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749
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2 EPIC MOVIE
3 THE PROMISE
4 GHOST RIDER
5 PRIMEVAL
6 THE HITCHER
7 300
8 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
9 YOU GOT ME
10 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
11 FLUSHED AWAY
12 SAAN NAGTATAGO SI HAPPINESS

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416
1 300
2 GHOST RIDER
3 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
4 THE GOOD SHEPHERD
5 YOU GOT ME
6 DEAD PEOPLE 2
7 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
8 SAAN NAGTATAGO SI HAPPINESS
9 THE HITCHER
10 PRIMEVAL

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2 THE HITCHER
3 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
4 300
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7 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
8 GHOST RIDER
9 PRIMEVAL

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3 YOU GOT ME
4 THE HITCHER

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2 THE HITCHER
3 CATCH AND RELEASE
4 GHOST RIDER
5 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
6 300
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8 PRIMEVAL
9 YOU GOT ME
10 EPIC MOVIE
11 BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA
12 DEAD PEOPLE 2

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1 300
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4 FLUSHED AWAY

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2 FLUSHED AWAY
3 PRIMEVAL
4 YOU GOT ME

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975
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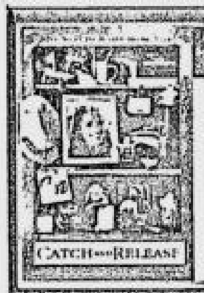
2 300
3 YOU GOT ME
4 THE HITCHER



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8 PRIMEVAL

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THE GOOD SHEPHERD R13 12:45,4:00,7:15,10:30	HITCHER R13 2:00,4:00,6:00, 8:00,10:00	300 R13 11:50,2:20,4:50, 7:20,9:50

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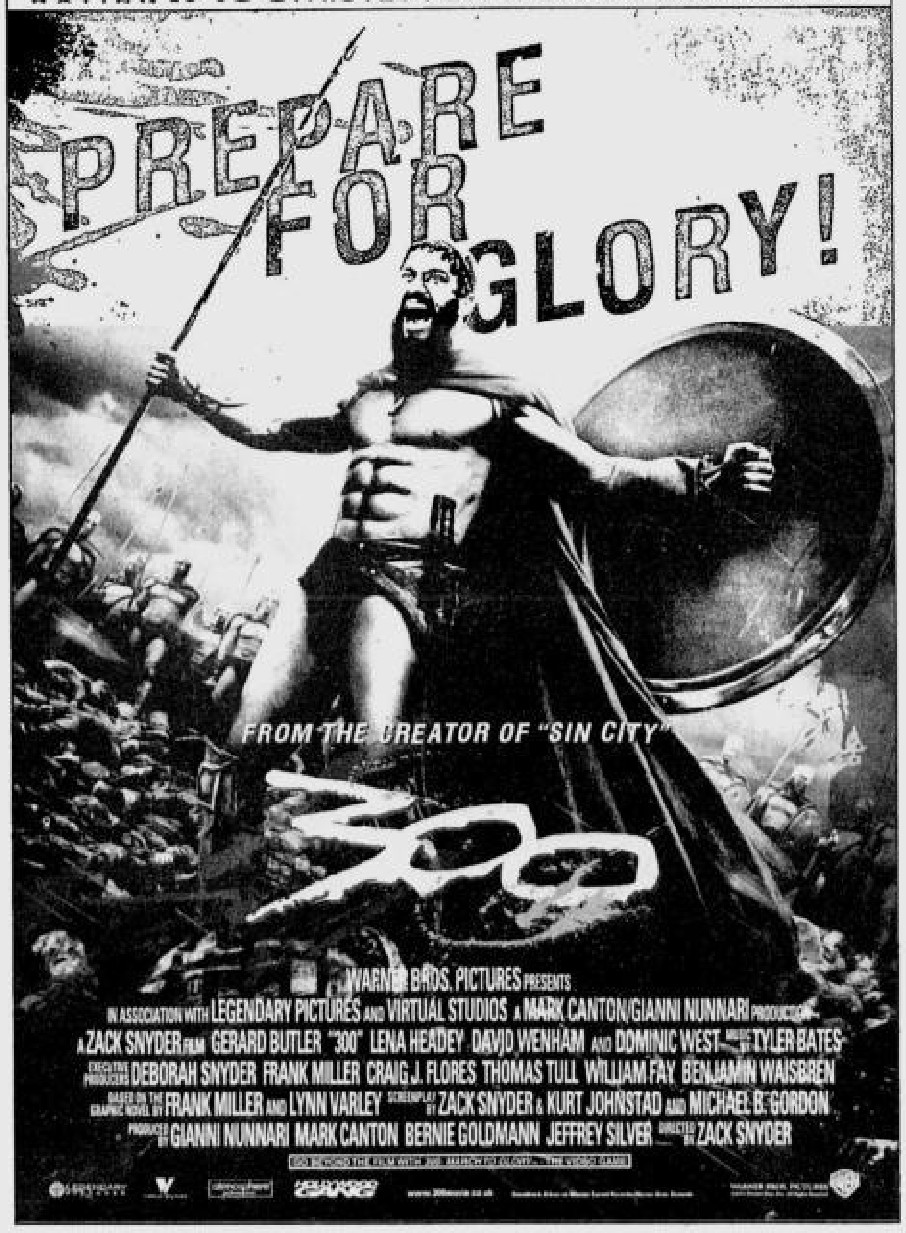

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10 THE PROMISE

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3 YOU GOT ME

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3 THE PROMISE
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3 TROIKA
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7 PRIMEVAL / GHOST RIDER
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3 YOU GOT ME
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2 300
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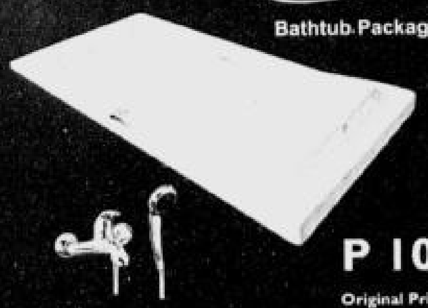

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Cinematic paean to eternal love

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

"THE FOUNTAIN" IS FILMMAKER **Darren Aronofsky**'s paean to eternal love. It begins in Spain during the time of Queen Isabella (**Rachel Weisz**). She sends a conquistador (**Hugh Jackman**) to a forgotten part of the globe that used to be the garden of Eden, where the Tree of Life still stands, now transformed into the living and evergreen Fountain of Youth.

Flash-forward many centuries later, and Jackman is now a spaceman in the distant future, floating in outer space in a huge globule that also harbors—the old Tree of Life, now a veritable ghost of its former robust and life-giving self, and about to expire.

Soon, a visual and thematic link is made between the Tree and the Spanish queen's emblematic reincarnation.

In other words, the woman Jackman's character loves has been transmogrified into the Tree itself. Or, more properly, it is their undying love for each other that is now iconically vivified in the dying tree. If it dies, their love finally expires, after many desperate centuries spent keeping it alive in the very worst of times.

CINEMATIC/ E4

GRAMMY darlings Dixie Chicks, left, are still not getting much airplay on country radio. But it's a good year for "American Idol" alumnae. Carrie Underwood, center, is in the running for top awards, and Kelly Pickler, right, got a nod in the Top New Female Vocalist category.

US not ready to make nice with Chicks

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE—RASCAL Flatts, Kenny Chesney and Carrie Underwood led nominees for Country Music Television's CMT Music Awards with three apiece last week.

Rascal Flatts was nominated for Video of the Year for their hit "What Hurts the Most." The song was also nominated in the group video category along with "Life is a Highway," the group's remake of a 1992 Tom Cochrane pop hit.

Underwood's "Before He Cheats" is up for Female Video, Video of the Year and Director of the Year, while Chesney's "You Save Me" is nominated for Male Video, Video of the Year and Director of the Year.

The Dixie Chicks received two nominations for the fan-voted awards: Video of the Year and Group Video for "Not Ready to Make Nice."

This is the trio's first CMT nominations since country radio largely banned them after lead singer Natalie Maines told a London audience in 2003 that they were ashamed President George W. Bush was from their home state of Texas.

"Not Ready to Make Nice" addressed the controversy head on with Maines singing in the chorus, "I'm not ready to make nice. I'm not ready to back down. I'm still mad as hell."

The Dixie Chicks recently won five Grammy awards including the three biggest ones—Song, Record and Album of the Year — for "Taking the Long Way" album and "Not Ready to Make Nice" single. But they still do not get much airplay on country radio.

Crowd pleasers in

Announcements were also made Monday for the annual American Country Music Awards and there was nary a Chick to be found despite the trio's last five Grammys. The Chicks have won 10 ACMs in their career, but have been shunned by the Nashville establishment since their Bush-bashing comments.

While the Academy of Country Music isn't ready to make nice with the Chicks, the organization made sure the usual Nasville-pleasing subjects were accounted for, led by George Straight, Brooks & Dunn and Rascal Flatts.

Strait, who has collected 15 ACM trophies, faces off with Brooks & Dunn and Rascal Flatts in the Entertainer of the Year and Album of the Year categories. Kenny Chesney, Vince Gill and Tim McGraw round out the race for Entertainer of the Year.

Grammy-certified Best New Artist Carrie Underwood is vying for five ACMs: Top Female Vocalist, Album of the Year for "Some Hearts" and Song of the Year, Single Record of the Year and Video of the Year for "Before He Cheats." Underwood was named Top New Female Vocalist at the 2006 ACMs.

(It was a good day for American Idol alums as Kellie Pickler picked up a nod for Top New Female Vocalist.)

The ACM nominations were announced at the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville.

Comedian Jeff Foxworthy will host the CMT show, which airs April 16. The 42nd Annual Country Music Awards will be given out May 15 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and will air live on CBS.

Reports from AP, E! Online

Why marriage is like basketball

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

NEWLYWEDS MARC AND DANICA (SOTTO) **Pingris** are honeymooning in Boracay. "It's surreal. I'm not yet used to signing my name as Pingris," she tells us. "I'm [just] observing his morning rituals. He's an early riser *pala! At maya-maya, gutom!*" Marc himself is all-praise for his wife: "Nica takes care of me even more now. She keeps reminding me not to eat fatty food. We read the Bible together in the morning. *Ako parati una nagigising!*" Isn't Danica wary of girls who hound cagers? "Proud *pa nga ako* if *may maghabol sa asawa ko. Hanggang tingin lang naman sila*. I trust Marc." Marriage is, indeed, like basketball. You just gotta keep your eye on the (basketball/wedding) ring!

'Happy Hearts'

At first, **Wendell Ramos** felt awkward doing his scenes as **Rustom Padilla**'s gay lover in Regal Entertainment's "Happy Hearts" (opens March 14). He says, "I play the 'she' in our relationship. First time *ko mag*-gay role *sa* movies. It's more complicated than what I've done on TV."

What did his role teach him about gay couples? "Just like a man and a woman, gays can also be happy as long as they respect each other." Is he open to gay benefactors? "No, thanks. I don't want anybody to spend money on me, *kahit* girl *pa siya*. I'd rather do the pampering."

Wendell's got a happy heart because he's a giver and not a taker.

Spice women

Just like the product they endorse (Maggi Magic Sarap), **Kris Aquino** and **Ai Ai de las Alas** are both full of spice. These two women have found the right ingredients for success. What they are still in search of is the perfect recipe for lasting love. Ai jokes, "*Si* friendship Kris *parang si* **Britney Spears**. *Di 'ata matanggap ni* James *ala* K-Fed *ni* Britney *na sobrang sikat ang asawa niya* (laughs)." Kris' career takes a back seat for now because of her delicate pregnancy. What's this we heard that she hardly eats 'cause she's afraid to gain too much weight after she gives birth? But isn't a yummy food trip the best way to get rid of the "bad trip" that controversies bring? What could Kris be cooking up next?

'Siquijor'

Centerstage Productions' "Siquijor: Mystic Island" will take you on an unforgettable journey starting March 14. The crew of a horror show, headed by **Ian Veneracion**, shoots on location in the island with their host **Assunta de Rossi**, executive producer **Angel Aquino**, cameraman **Yul Servo**, writer **Sid Lucero** and production assistant **Coco Martin**. Strange things happen, steadily building up to a hair-raising finale.

Assunta admits she was scared of going to Siquijor because of the spooky tales she had heard about it. "I brought *pang-kontra na* onyx cuff links, which my brother-in-law lent me." What about a lucky charm so that she and hubby Jules will have a baby soon? "Our physical assets are enough," she quips. "No need for gadgets and *anting anting*."

This *bellisima* Italiana is really armed with charms!

New show

Before show biz gossip gets stale towards the weekend—"Showbiz Ka" sorts them out to tackle the meatiest truth and rumors as the week starts. It's hosted by bubbly **Pat-P Daza Planas**, Mondays through Fridays, 8 p.m. on RPN 9.

It's everybody's business when it's show business with Pat-P as the *chikapreneur*!

New band

Craeons, a young break-out band, is proving to be a force to be reckoned with. Its single "Grabe" peaked at No. 1 for weeks at Campus Radio 97.1. Check out its debut album, "Non-Toxic" (Sony BMG). The band's music is a fusion of alternative rock, funk, grunge, new metal rock, rock 'n' roll, jazz and blues in one energetic package. Let's color our world with the Craeons!

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com

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PG 13

3 THE GOOD SHEPHERD
1:30, 4:50, 8:10, 11:20
R 13

4 THE HITCHER.
1:55, 4:10, 6:25, 8:40, 10:55
R 13

SHANG CINEPLEX
1 PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
MTRCB GP
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3 THE HITCHER
MTRCB. R-13
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2 300
MTRCB: R-13
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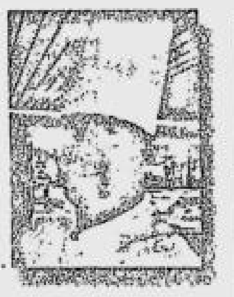

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Classes opens : June 5 and July 10, 2007.

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Class opens: April 10, 2007
For all courses mentioned above, please call the school for tuition fee details and other information. There are only 14 slots in each batch so applicants are urged to register immediately.
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THE HITCHER
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DEAD PEOPLE 2
1:30 / 3:30 / 5:30 / 7:30 / 9:30
GHOST RIDER
4:50 / 9:40
YOU GOT ME
12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30
MUSIC & LYRICS
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IT'S A BOY GIRL THING
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300
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5 YOU GOT ME
12:00 R3 / 1:35 / 3:50 / 6:05 / 8:20
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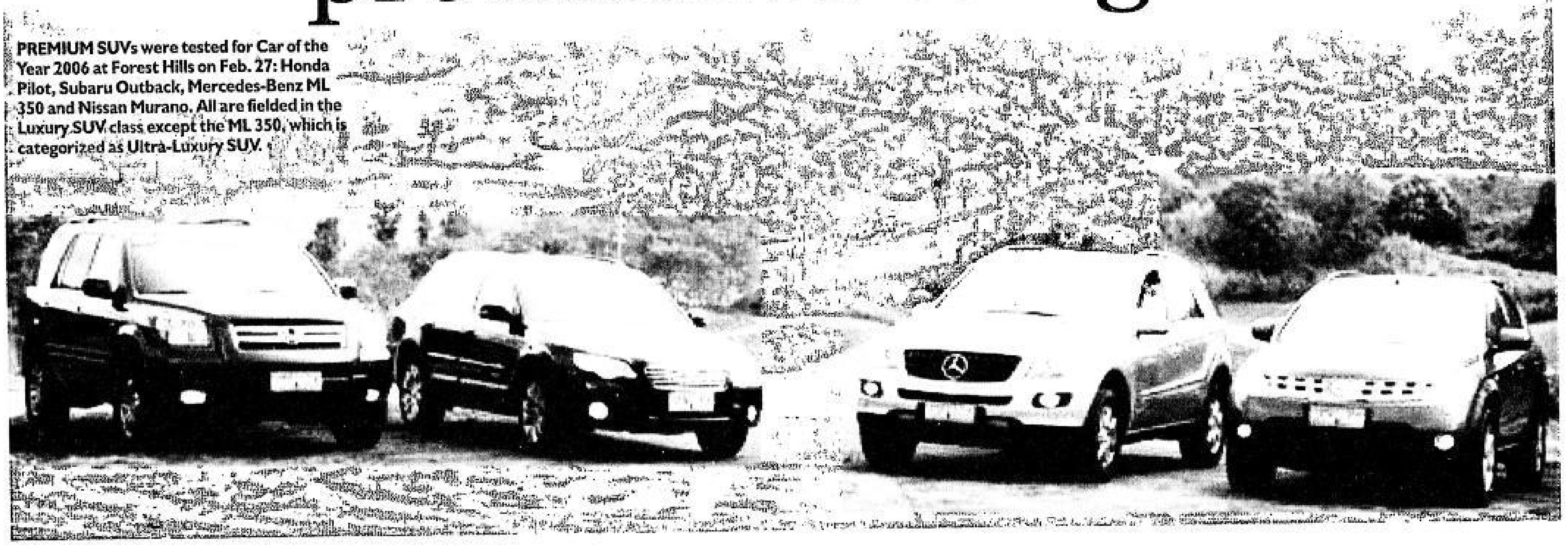
Car of the Year winners proclaimed tonight



PREMIUM SUVs were tested for Car of the Year 2006 at Forest Hills on Feb. 27: Honda Pilot, Subaru Outback, Mercedes-Benz ML 350 and Nissan Murano. All are fielded in the Luxury SUV class except the ML 350, which is categorized as Ultra-Luxury SUV.

> CAGI maintains its independence and avoids any conflict of interest by not seeking or accepting financial support from car manufacturers and by not charging them an entrance fee for participation in COTY

At the 3rd Car of the Year Philippines (COTY-P) Awards dinner tonight at Rockwell Tent, Makati, 11 category winners, four Special Award winners and the Car of the Year 2006 will be proclaimed, finally ending months of suspense.

The Awards Night follows seven weekends of instrumented and qualitative testing of 37 motor vehicles starting in November 2006 and continuing in January and February 2007 at the Forest Hills Golf and Country Club in Antipolo, Rizal.

COTY-P, now on its third year, was initiated by the Car Awards Group, Inc. (CAGI), a non-stock, non-profit organization of motoring journalists from various newspapers, car magazines, television car programs and online media. CAGI maintains its independence and avoids any conflict of interest by not seeking or accepting financial support from car manufacturers and by not charging them an entrance fee for participation in COTY.

CAGI Board

The 2006-07 CAGI board of directors consists of Aida Sevilla Mendoza, Philippine Daily Inquirer motoring columnist, president; Alvin Uy of motioncars.com, vice president; Lester Dizon, editor of Motorcycle Magazine, treasurer (on leave), Roberto Consunji, 4x4 Off-Road editor of Top Gear, secretary and Aris R. Ilagan of Manila Bulletin, public relations officer.

CAGI founding president Armin Amio, managing editor of Gadgets magazine and 2005-06 CAGI president Manny de los Reyes, editor-in-chief of Speed magazine and Philippine Star motoring page contributor, make up the CAGI Council of Advisers.

The CAGI testing committee -- which sets the testing guidelines, supervises the instrumented and qualitative tests and tallies the score sheets emanating from the tests -- is headed by Top Gear technical editor Ferman Lao with Ulysses Ang of motioncars.com and Inquirer motoring columnist Andrei Palma as members. The tally sheets and results are audited by Sycip Gorres Velayo & Co. (SGV) before the winners are announced at the Awards Night dinner.

Preceding

CAGI tests production cars that were available on the market during the preceding year. Thus, the COTY-P winners proclaimed at the 1st Car of the Year Awards Night on February 24, 2005

CAR/ F2

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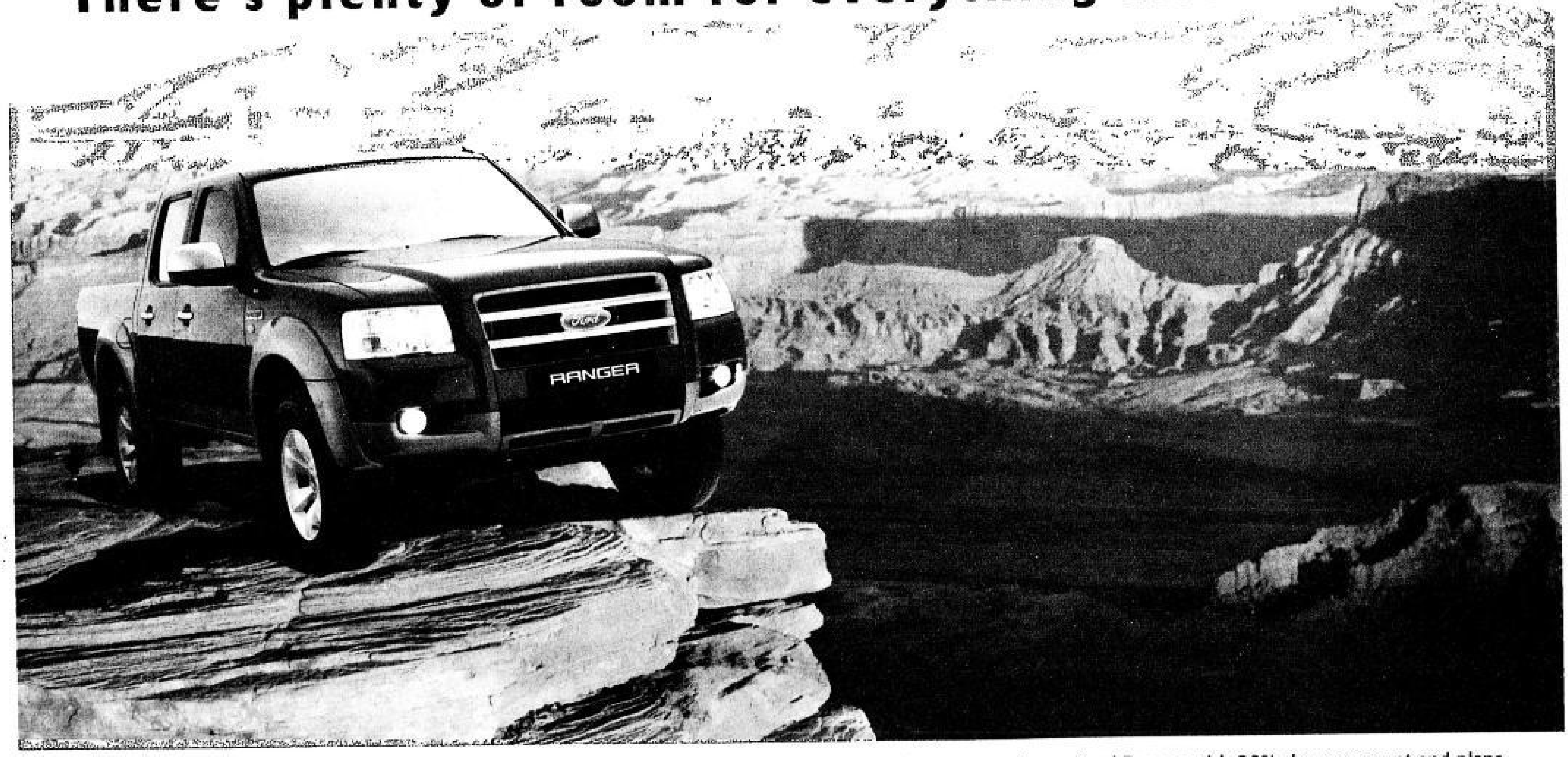

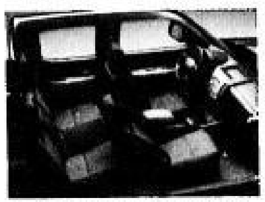

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Car of the Year winners proclaimed tonight

From page F1

were vehicles sold in the Philippines in 2004 and the winners of the 2nd COTY Awards on March 30, 2006 were cars and trucks sold here in 2005.

Entries that do not win in their respective categories are excluded from the next COTY-P unless they have undergone major engineering changes or have new safety equipment. This partially explains why there were fewer entries for the 3rd COTY-P Another reason is that some models that could have participated in the 3rd COTY-P were unavailable, having been sold out before the tests began.

> A month or so before the tests start, CAGI informs car manufacturers about the test schedule that is arranged according to category over a period of six or seven weekends

A month or so before the tests start, CAGI informs car manufacturers about the test schedule that is arranged according to category over a period of six or seven weekends. For the 3rd COTY-P, the test sessions were held at a closed-off area within the grounds of the Forest Hills Golf and Country, which was also the test venue for the 2nd COTY-P. But this time a longer, more challenging route for the tests was staked out by the test marshals, Applied Leisure in Sales and Operations (ALSO) group members and former rally racers Raul Asuncion, Joey Lanuza, Ernie Reyes and Barry Ortiz.

Entries

The entries for tonight's awards fall within 11 categories based on suggested retail price (SRP):

Subcompact Car (P750,000 and below)

Chevrolet Aveo, Chevrolet Spark, Hyundai Getz (2005 Subcompact Car of the Year), Kia Rio and Suzuki Swift;

Compact Car (P750,000 up to P1,100,000)

Ford Focus Trend, Honda Civic, Mitsubishi Lancer (2005 Compact Car of the Year);

Executive Car (P1.1 million - P2.6 million)

Honda Accord, Mazda6 (2005 Executive Car of the Year and 2005 Car of the Year), Mitsubishi Galant 240M, Subaru Legacy, Toyota Camry;

Luxury Car (P2.6 million - P4.0 million)

Audi A4 1.8 TDI, Chrysler 300C (2005 Luxury Car of the Year), Volvo S60

Ultra-Luxury Car (P4.0 million - P6.0 million)

Audi A6 3.0 TDI, Mercedes-Benz E280 Elegance. No unit of the 2005 winner in this category, the BMW 530i, was available for testing.

Entry-Level Sport Utility Vehicle or SUV (P1.6 million and below)

Hyundai Santa Fe, Kia Sportage, Mazda Tribute (2005 Entry-Level SUV of the Year), Subaru Forester, Suzuki Grand Vitara, Toyota RAV4

Luxury SUV (P1.6 million - P4.0 million)

Honda Pilot, Jeep Commander, Nissan Murano, Subaru Outback;

Ultra-Luxury SUV (P4.0 million - P6.0 million)

Mercedes-Benz ML350 (2005 Ultra-Luxury SUV of the Year). Since the M-Class was the only entry, no award will be given in this category. It will be given a Special Participation Award.

Entry-Level Multipurpose Vehicle or MPV (P1.2 million and below)

Toyota Avanza, Toyota Innova (2005 Entry-Level MPV of the Year);

Luxury MPV (P1.2 million and above)

Chrysler Pacifica, Mitsubishi Grandis (2005 Luxury MPV of the Year), Toyota Previa;

Pickup Truck

Ford Ranger (2005 Pickup of the Year), Mitsubishi Strada.

Special awards

All the category winners qualify for the big trophy, the Car of the Year Award. Aside from these, four Special Awards will be given. The Special Awards, which are determined by CAGI's executive committee and testing committee members via secret voting, are:

Best Value for Money

A vehicle that represents the most "bang for the buck" while retaining good levels of comfort, refinement and utility;

Best Safety Package

A vehicle that ultimately makes the occupants safe in case of an accident with its comprehensive list of both passive and active safety features;

Best in Over-All Design

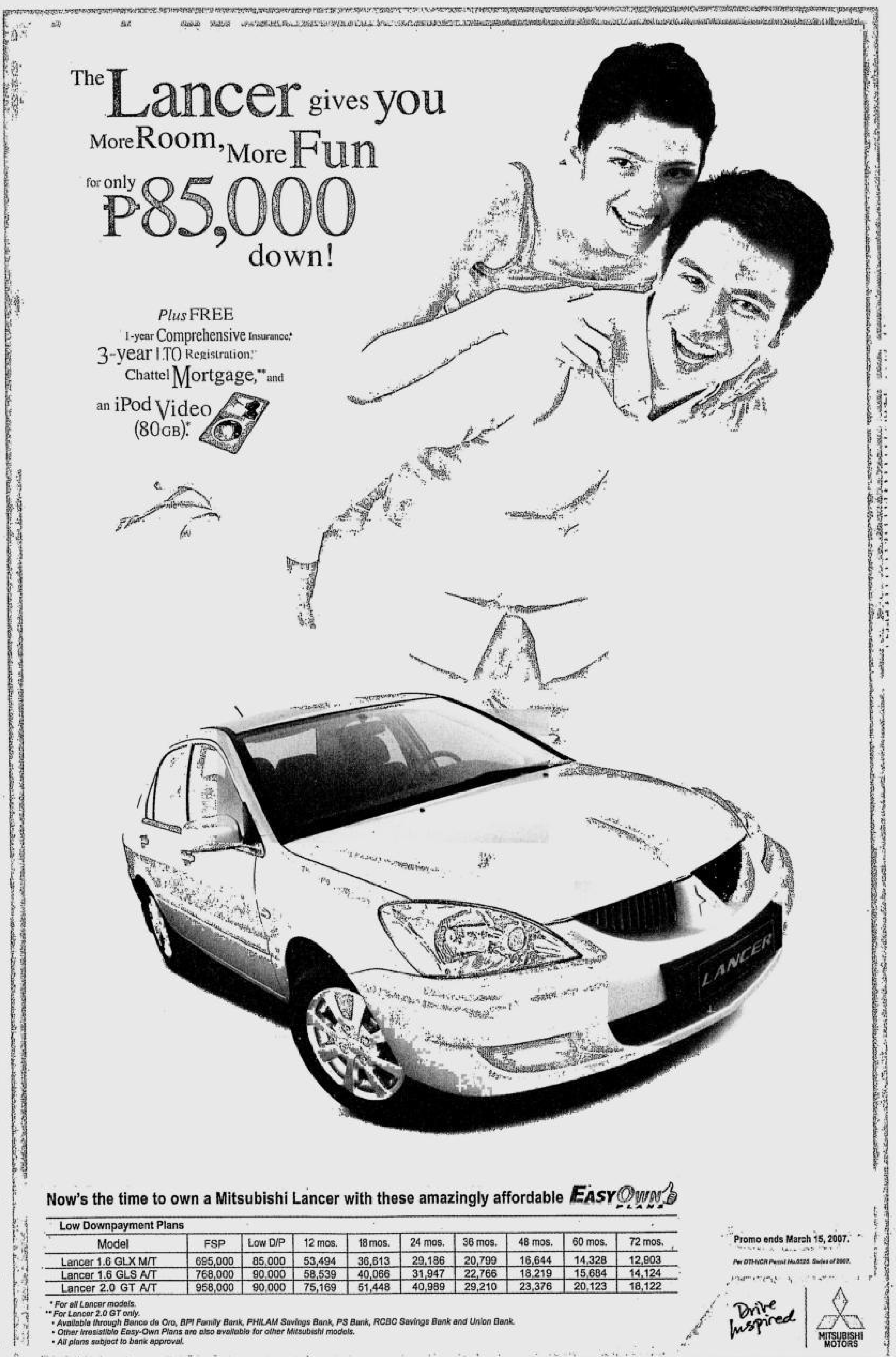
A vehicle that blends both beauty and ergonomics in one seamless and well-thought-of package;

Best Technical Innovation

A vehicle that contains at least one innovation that leads to better performance for the driver.

Display

The category winners and Car of the Year will be displayed at the Manila International Auto Show (MIAS) at the World Trade Center from March 29, to April 1, 2007. Worldbex Services International, the organizer of MIAS, is the main sponsor of the 3rd COTY Awards Night while Rockwell Land Corporation is the venue sponsor.



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3 YEAR WARRANTY

Car of the Year winners proclaimed tonight

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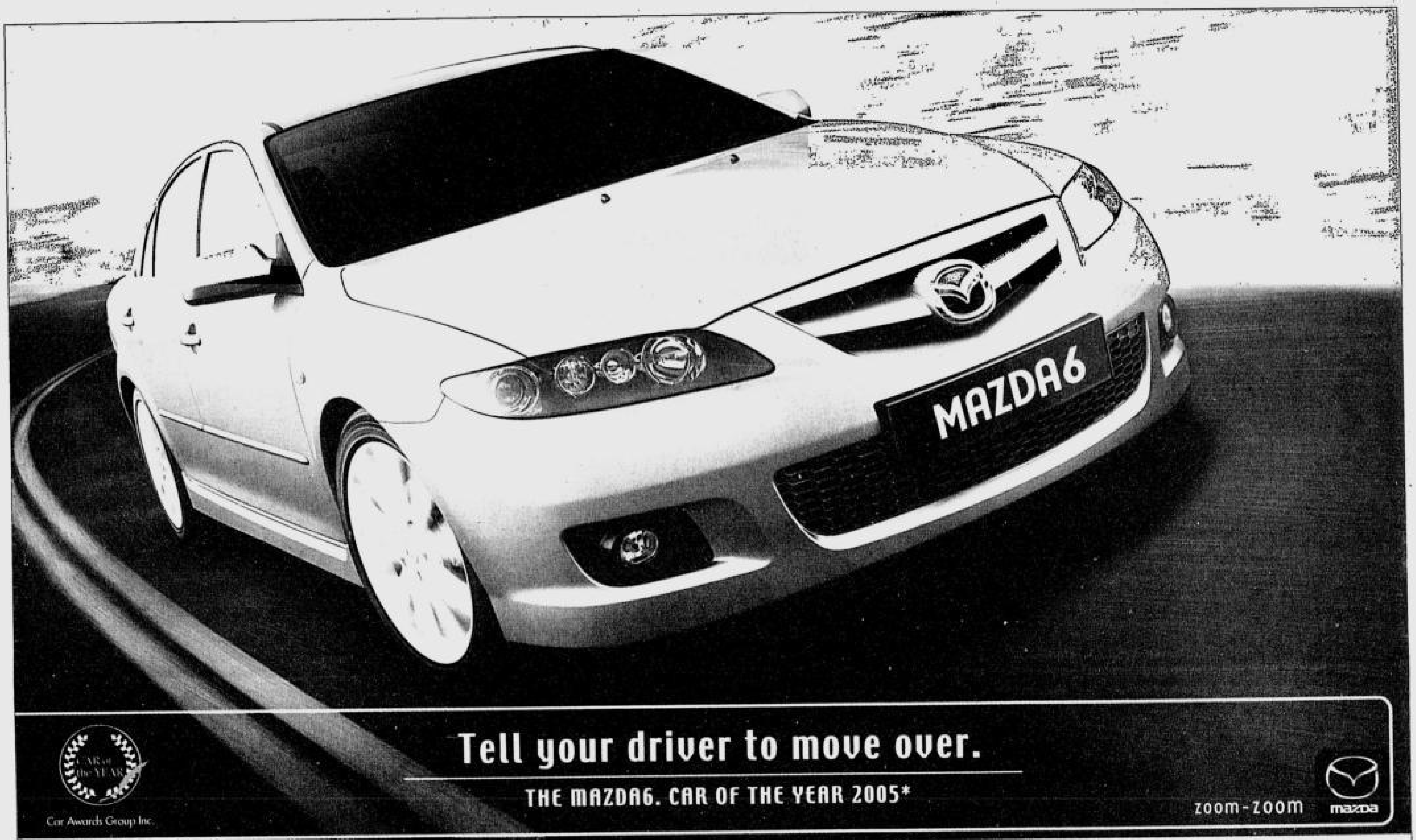
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The Board of Directors of CAR AWARDS GROUP PHILIPPINES (CAGI) cordially invites you to the 3rd CAR OF THE YEAR (COTY-P) awards night to be held at the Rockwell Tent, Rockwell Center, Makati City on March 8, 2007, 7:00PM

The Car of the Year is once again up for grabs along with the best of 11 best-in-class winners. Thirty five motor vehicles vying for top honors underwent quantitative and qualitative tests over a span of six weekends last November until this February at an enclosed area in Forest Hills Golf and Country Club, Antipolo.

The Car Awards Group, Inc. (CAGI), an independent, non-profit, non-stock association of 40 motoring journalists from more than two dozen print, broadcast and online media outfits, conducted the tests with the aim of recognizing and encouraging the achievement of higher engineering, design, performance and safety standards by car manufacturers.

This would not have been at all possible without the support of COTY-P sponsors who share CAGI's belief in the valuable contribution of the automobile industry to Philippine economic progress and national development.

Those who supported and cooperated with the 3rd COTY-P deserve the nation's esteem and applause.

Also catch the Coty-P winning vehicles on display on March 29 to April 1 at the Manila International Auto Show 2007 at the World Trade Center, Pasay City.

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